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RENAISSANCE AVERROISM AND ITS AFTERMATH: ARABIC PHILOSOPHY IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Anna Akasoy
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Preface

Most of the articles in this volume were presented at the conference Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe, held in June 2008 at the Warburg Institute. We would like to thank the Warburg Institute for hosting the conference. We would also like to thank the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the British Academy, the Institute of Philosophy (School of Advanced Study, University of London) and the Cassamarca Foundation for supporting the conference and the publication of this volume. Finally, we would like to thank Raphaëlle Burns for her invaluable help during the last stages of the editorial work.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

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Averroan, Averroist and Averroistic

Before launching into the discussions and debates at the heart of this volume, a number of disclaimers and caveats are in order. First of all, this is not primarily a book on Ibn Rushd, the renowned judge, physician and commentator of Aristotle who lived in twelfth-century al-Andalus, but on a cultural phenomenon known since the thirteenth century as Averroism. This is no terminological hair-splitting on our part: keeping this difference in mind while reading the book is crucial. That the commentator Ibn Rushd was also a thinker in his own right adds to the difficulties in disentangling the nature of the authorial intention in his work. Some initial terminological qualifications, we hope, will shed light on the linguistic and cultural complexities of the matter: in this volume, the name 'Ibn Rushd' denotes the actual historical figure, whereas his literary incarnation in translations and philosophical treatises of the Latin West will be referred to as 'Averroes'. We have taken special care in distinguishing between 'Averroan', 'Averroist' and 'Averroistic' every time we thought it necessary to alert the reader to the constantly intersecting levels of history and historiography.

'Averroan' refers to any philosophical view that belongs directly to Ibn Rushd and is synonym with 'Rushdian'.[1] 'Averroist' refers to opinions held by any follower of Ibn Rushd in the Latin West during the late Middle Ages, the Renaissance

[1] See Jean-Baptiste Brenet, *Transferts du sujet: La noétique d'Averroès selon Jean de Jandun* (Paris: Vrin, 2003), p. 16, n. 1: '"Rushdien" désigne ce qui ressortit à Averroès (et non à son interprétation latine), ou à Ibn Rushd (lorsqu'on fait référence à des oeuvres que les Latins n'avaient pas).' On the many cultural and linguistic complexities involving Averroes's reception in the Latin West, see Alain de Libera, 'Introduction', in Averroès, *L'intelligence et la pensée. Sur le* De anima, ed. by A. de Libera (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), pp. 7–45.

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and – though less and less frequently – during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Finally, 'Averroistic' refers to the generic cultural label denoting a pronounced rationalistic attitude, of a vaguely Aristotelian ilk, towards questions of philosophical psychology (in particular, the nature of the human mind and its survival after the death of the body), natural determinism and, above all, the relationships between philosophical freedom and dogmatic truths, often of a religious kind.[2] Averroistic thinkers looked (and still look) at Averroes as the philosopher who denied the personal identity of human beings, of course, but also as an incarnation of Machiavellian dissimulation in politics and religion, as one of the heroes of the *libertinage érudit*, as a precursor of seventeenth-century materialism, as a pantheist and even an atheist.

It is the label 'Averroistic' that often makes historians of medieval and Renaissance philosophy uncomfortable.[3] And yet the perception of Ibn Rushd's work as conveying a number of 'Averroistic' attitudes towards religion and politics lasted long after the sixteenth century and in fact reached its prime as late as the eighteenth century. As such, 'Averroistic' free-thinking and 'erudite' libertinism can legitimately be seen as part of early modern European culture, for cultural perceptions may at times be as significant as the original texts that, more or less obliquely, generated or inspired such perceptions. As is sometimes revealed by the long-term debate over what one should mean by 'Averroism', anxiety about philological and political correctness betrays greater concerns about the meaning of philosophy and historical research.

Another important qualification regards the terminological diversity that characterises the meanings of 'intellect' in Averroan and Averroist works. In this volume, the reader will encounter all sorts of intellects: material, passive, possible, potential, dispositional, acquired and agent. The following terse specifications are simply meant to provide a preliminary sketch, a vademecum in the uneven territories of Averroan noetics. In Averroes's cosmos, intellects are many and differentiated according to their degree of perfection, i.e., 'actuality'. Their function is to actualise, that is, bring to completion all sorts of processes that lie in a condition of potentiality. In so doing, intellects produce reality and increase the level of moral perfection (and therefore bliss) in the universe. The 'material' intellect is the universal receiver of all sublunary forms, a state of pure receptivity, and since in order to be a proper receiver, a receiver cannot have in itself anything of the received items, the material intellect is in fact immaterial. It is the universal repository of all the intelligibles shared by human knowing subjects. It is called 'material' because of its passive (*patibilis*) nature.[4] By contrast, the active or agent intellect is unmixed, impassible

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[2] As pointed out by Massimo Campanini, 'an aura of militant intellectualism' has always surrounded the many incarnations of Averroism in European culture. See his *Averroè* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2007), p. 8.

[3] See, for instance, P. O. Kristeller, 'Paduan Averroism and Alexandrism in the Light of Recent Studies', in Id., *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990 [1964, 1980]), pp. 111–118 (113).

[4] Jacopo Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, in *De rebus naturalibus libri XXX* (Frankfurt: Lazar Zetzner, 1607; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1966), c. 963CDE. See also Tommaso Campanella, *Del senso delle cose e della magia*, ed. by Germana Ernst (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2007), p. 84: 'seguirà che, uno intendendo una cosa, tutti l'intenderiano per l'unità dell'intelletto.'

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and separate, defined by Averroes as *forma nobis*, a form *for* us, but not *in* us.[5] According to Averroist conventional wisdom, the intellect cannot be the substantial form of individual human beings. Averroes argued that there is one mind for all human beings, corresponding to the lowest intellect in the series of emanated intellects. Humankind thinks by being actualised by the lowest of the celestial intelligences. However, although they are not intellects, individual human souls can connect with the intellect (possible and even active) every time they engage in forms of abstract knowledge. The reward of this intellectual endeavour is that, together with cognitive clarity, human souls reach a state of intellectual beatitude. Mental happiness is the reward of intellectual work (*adeptio*). Further varieties in the motley crew of Renaissance intellects can be found in the rest of this volume.

Finally, a few words on what we may call the hermeneutical predicament at the heart of Averroes's philosophy and its reception: Aristotle, Ibn Rushd, Averroes and Averroist Aristotelians are constituent elements, all connected to each other, of what we might call an exegetical nebula, and yet Ibn Rushd is simultaneously more and less than Aristotle, Averroes more and less than Ibn Rushd, and medieval and early modern Averroist Aristotelians more and less than the simple sum of Aristotle and Ibn Rushd cum Averroes. The surplus of meaning generated in the shift from Aristotle to Ibn Rushd to Averroes and Averroist Aristotelianism has resulted in extraordinarily creative appropriations and reuses, while the contours separating the elements of the nebula remain nevertheless frustratingly blurry. It is certainly not an accident that 'who is who' has often been the question used by some historians in their attempts to downplay the issue of Averroism and the Averroists from the later Middle Ages to the early modern period.

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Early Modern Averroism: Why Bother?

A scholar of Islamic law and theology and Graeco-Arabic philosophy and medicine, Abū'l-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Rushd, Latinised as Averroes, was born in 1126 in Cordoba into a renowned family of jurists, and died in Marrakesh in 1198. Court physician of the dynasty of the Almohads, who ruled over al-Andalus from 1147, he also worked as a judge and served in a number of important official positions. Around 1168, he wrote a treatise on law, *Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa-nihāyat al-muqtaṣid fi'l-fiqh* ('The Starting-Point of the Learned Man Engaged in an Effort of Personal Meditation and the Final Achievement of the Learned Person, Who is Balanced in Questions of Law'), in which he discussed the difficulties of dealing with the divergent opinions among Muslim jurists. It was in this period that he was introduced at court by the philosopher Abū Bakr ibn Ṭufayl (c. 1105–1185) and appointed as

[5] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953) p. 485; *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. Richard C. Taylor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 387.

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personal physician to the caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf in 1182. Originally interested in logical and medical subjects, Ibn Rushd became increasingly engaged in other branches of philosophy. Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, who apparently had a keen interest in Aristotelian philosophy, asked Ibn Rushd to produce an exhaustive and consistent corpus of exegetical companions to have a better understanding of Aristotle's works. How to communicate elite knowledge to a lay audience was an important concern of the Almohad movement. Ibn Rushd addressed the problems of sharing allegorical interpretations of religious texts particularly in his legal and theological works composed between 1179 and 1180 – *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa-taqrīr mā bayna'l-sharī'a wa'l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl* ('Book of the Decisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom'), *Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla* ('Uncovering the Methods of Proofs with Respect to the Beliefs of the Religious Community') and *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* ('Incoherence of the Incoherence', *Destructio destructionis*, in Latin). In Ibn Rushd's view, conflicts originate in every field of human learning as a result of the fragmenting of truth into irreconcilable interpretations. Dominique Urvoy, among others, has highlighted the close relationship between Almohadism and Averroes's philosophy.[6] More recently, Massimo Campanini has suggested that Averroes regarded philosophy as an activity directed towards different ends, an activity reliant on different approaches depending on the circumstances of its exercise. It seems safe to say that, as a courtier, a judge and a physician, Ibn Rushd looked at philosophy as the cornerstone of a larger cultural and political project.[7]

At a certain point during the thirteenth century, some of Ibn Rushd's ideas began to trickle into the Latin West. The discovery of his formidable interpretation of Aristotle went hand in hand with the recovery of Aristotle's own work, included as lemmata in Ibn Rushd's long commentaries. The impact that this material had on the art masters in the main universities of Europe, especially in Paris, was momentous. Ibn Rushd became Averroes, i.e., the key to unlock the mysteries of the 'master of those who know', to quote the poet. Indeed, it must have felt as if in the course of a few decades the intellect of humankind had actualised an immense amount of latent knowledge; as a result, mental happiness spread from Paris to Bologna, from Oxford to Erfurt. Averroes arrived in the Latin West at different times. From Siger of Brabant to Immanuel Kant, Averroan, Averroist and Averroistic notions appeared and reappeared in the philosophical culture of early modern Europe. There may have been some episodes of historiographic hallucination, but a good number of Averroist sightings correspond to reality.

The arrival of Averroist interpretations of Aristotle in the philosophical republic of letters, however, was not always greeted with enthusiasm. This boldly original view of the cosmos and human knowledge proved irksome for many philosophers. The most disputed points included: the risk of reifying the activity of thought (for such an activity does not belong to individual cogitating human beings); the charge

[6] Dominique Urvoy, *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*(London: Rouledge, 1991), p. 75.

[7] Campanini, *Averroè*, p. 42.

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of naturalistic determinism; an elitist view of human happiness; a condescending attitude towards the religious experience of ordinary people (for religion is a rhetorical dilution of truth accessible to the masses).

This volume intends to assess the impact that the reception of Averroist ideas had on the philosophical culture of the early modern period. Amos Bertolacci sets the stage by introducing the conflict between Avicenna and Averroes as reflected in the latter's criticism of the former's theories on human generation. This disagreement is symptomatic of different attitudes to the relationship between philosophy and religion. The following are some of the questions examined in subsequent contributions: What was Averroism in the early modern period? Who were the Averroists at the time (provided that any trace of Averroism or Averroists can still be detected in that period)? Or maybe, rephrasing the question in a way that allows us to avoid all trappings of conspiratorial theorizing: What were the perceptions of Averroism from the end of the Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century? And, closely related to this point, how were and are these perceptions dealt with historiographically? Our understanding of Averroism rests on an illustrious tradition of philosophical and historical research carried out by generations of eminent scholars, such as Martin Grabmann, Bruno Nardi, Fernand van Steenberghen, Anneliese Maier, Antoine René Gauthier, Zdzisław Kuksewicz, Charles J. Ermatinger, Ruedi Imbach and Alain de Libera. And yet much work remains to be done, not only because medieval and early modern material is certainly still waiting to be unearthed somewhere, in both archives and books, ready to shed more light on the reception of Averroes's work, but also because the repercussions of Averroes's philosophy, and more generally, of Arabic philosophy on European culture, beyond all facile polemics about the persistence of a supposedly original template of Greco-Roman learning, still needs to be evaluated in all its scope. As the final chapters in this volume by John Marenbon, James Montgomery and Anna Akasoy demonstrate, Averroism remains a hot topic in the field of philosophical historiography.[8]

To complicate the story further, the reception of Ibn Rushd's philosophy in the Latin West can be seen as a tale of many creative misunderstandings. It certainly is an extraordinary case of philosophical acculturation, which, as this volume shows, lasted for some centuries after its beginning in the thirteenth century. Brian Copenhaver refers to the kind of Averroism criticised by Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) in his *Theologia Platonica* as a 'construct' largely assembled out of Aquinas's work.[9] In this volume, Michael Allen insists on the composite nature of Ficino's Averroes and Averroists, while in his chapter on 'Humanism and the Assessment of Averroes in the Renaissance', Craig Martin argues that during the Renaissance Averroes was perceived as a philosopher who had been acquainted with the Greek commentators and could therefore be considered as a reliable source by a good

[8] See *infra* in this volume, John Marenbon, 'Ernest Renan and Averroism: The Story of a Misinterpretation'; James E. Montgomery, 'Leo Strauss and the Alethiometer'; Anna Akasoy, 'Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist? The Problem, the Debate, and its Philosophical Implications'.

[9] Brian Copenhaver, 'Ten Arguments in Search of a Philosopher: Averroes and Aquinas in Ficino's *Platonic Theology*', *Vivarium*, 47 (2009), pp. 444–479.

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number of Renaissance authors.[10] The idea that Averroes followed Greek authors and commentators in his interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy was particularly appealing to Renaissance scholars who were in the process of recovering a more genuinely historical view of ancient philosophy.[11]

Averroism remained a term of philosophical insult long after the thirteenth century. Thus, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) could dismiss Kant's transcendental idealism as yet another incarnation of Averroism, as Marco Sgarbi shows in his chapter in this volume.[12] A long list of abuses worthy of Petrarch's rage can be found in an early Renaissance summa against Averroes written by Ambrogio Leone (1458/9-1525), a humanist from Nola, near Naples, and a correspondent of Erasmus, who in his youth had studied medicine and philosophy at Padua between 1477 and 1484 under Nicoletto Vernia (c. 1420–1499) and Agostino Nifo (ca. 1473–1538 or 1545). In 1517 he published his *Castigationes adversus Averroem* ('Emendations against Averroes') in 30 books (reprinted in 1524 and 1532). The opening epistle to the 'excellent reader' describes Averroes as a 'thief'.

> Averroes went wrong in logic, philosophy, mathematics and other disciplines, and this happened partly because he interpreted Aristotle, Plato, other ancient philosophers and their interpreters in a wrong way, partly because he stole other people's sayings. These were not his own, but he introduced and presented them as if they were his own. Therefore, in this book not only will you have Averroes detected, convicted and reprehended as a thief; you will also get in the easiest way extensive and deep knowledge of logic and the art of language, of natural and divine things, and this in Latin and according to the precepts and teachings of the Aristotelian school.[13]

In his critique of the Averroist encyclopaedia, Leone seems to combine two principal anti-Averroist responses: humanist historicism and pristine Aristotelianism. His agenda is both rhetorical and metaphysical. In the dedicatory letter to Pope Leo X, Leone presents Averroes as a liar (*falsus homo*), an unreliable interpreter (*mendax interpres*), a corruptor of epistemological and ethical norms (*recti verique corruptor*), a defiler of the truth (*veritatis depravator*), impious (*impius*), a weak logician (*hebes*

[10] See *infra* in this volume, Michael J. B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino on Saturn, the Plotinian Mind, and the Monster of Averroes'; Craig Martin, 'Humanism and the Assessment of Averroes in the Renaissance'.

[11] In this sense, Renaissance authors such as Tiberio Bacilieri and Girolamo Cardano did not find the presence of Themistian themes in Averroes particularly surprising. After all, ironic as they seem to us, eclectic accretions are the stuff of the history of human thought; 'it is more than a little ironic', writes Richard C. Taylor, that 'the foundational consideration that motivated this famous Aristotelian commentator is primarily derived from the Neoplatonic analysis of intellect provided by Themistius in his *Paraphrase of the* De Anima'. See Taylor, 'Intelligibles in Act in Averroes', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 111–140 (140).

[12] See *infra* in this volume Marco Sgarbi, 'Immanuel Kant, Universal Understanding, and the Meaning of Averroism in the German Enlightenment'.

[13] Ambrogio Leone, 'Lector optime', in *Castigationes adversus Averroem* (Venice: Bernardino and Matteo Vitali, 1517) [no page number]. On Leone, see Leen Spruit, 'Leone, Ambrogio', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana: Rome, 1960-), LXIV, pp. 560–562.

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logicus), an uncouth thinker (*crassus philosophus*) and a braggart (*audaculus*). But worst of all, according to Leone, was that Averroes hoped to make a name for himself in philosophy by ridiculing all the religions of the world. He who despises God, however, destroys 'the first principle and author of everything' and for this reason, in the end Averroes drowned in an ocean of lies (*in medio falsitatis pelago demersus*). To those who still believe that 'Averroes is the soul of Aristotle', Leone recommends the most recent developments in philosophical textual criticism and the newly restored exegetical expertise of the Greek commentators: 'to the extent that Aristotelian loci might be understood in the clearest possible way and explained by Greek people, he decided to revise Averroes through the newly restored Alexander, Simplicius and Themistius'.[14]

History as a humanist discipline is an integral part of the story of Averroes's reception in the early modern period. In this volume, the chequered career of Averroism in the emerging new genre of philosophical history is explored by Gregorio Piaia, in a chapter concerning Averroes's place in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century histories of philosophy.[15] In Piaia's opinion, among the reasons that led to the demise of the Averroist vision of nature, matter and human thinking, was Averroes's close association with Aristotelianism and his reputation as an atheist in disguise. Piaia examines a wide variety of works – critical, erudite, belletristic and popular. From Georg Horn's *Historiae philosophicae libri septem* (1655) to Johannes Gerhard Voss's *De philosophia et philosophorum libri duo* (1657–1658), from Laurent Bordelon's *Theatre philosophique* (1692) to André-François Boureau Deslandes's *Histoire critique de la philosophie* (1737), the perception of Averroes and Arabic philosophy varied, sometimes even within the same treatise. Piaia concludes his thorough account by indicating two distinctive ways of understanding the genre of history of philosophy, the *historia philosophica*, in a Baylean and Bruckerian sense, as an inquiry that is both critically and philosophically engaged on the one hand, and the *histoire de l'esprit humain*, understood as a form of cultural study, attentive to the historical and religious details in the evolution of human thought on the other. In both cases, Averroism, understood as a comprehensive interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy, permutated, often insensibly, into Averroistic exercises in atheist dissimulation and libertine scepticism. One of the last works analysed by Piaia is the *Anleitung zur Historie der Leibnitzisch-Wolffischen Philosophie* (1737), by the German philosopher and physician Georg Volckmar Hartmann. Marco Sgarbi's chapter starts from where Piaia's ends. Sgarbi traces currents of Aristotelianism (more or less inflected in an Averroist or Averroistic sense) in Germany before Kant, and he confirms that at the end of the eighteenth century, being called an 'Averroist' could still be a cause for philosophical embarrassment.[16] Indeed, the issues of dissimulation and double-truth still seem to affect the

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[14] Ambrogio Leone to Pope Leo X, in Leone, *Castigationes adversus Averroem* [no page number].

[15] Gregorio Piaia, 'Averroes and Arabic Philosophy in the Modern *Historia Philosophica*: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries'.

[16] Sgarbi, 'Immanuel Kant, Universal Understanding, and the Meaning of Averroism in the German Enlightenment', in this volume, pp. @@.

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contemporary debate about Averroism, and more generally Arabic philosophy. In her chapter on the notoriously complicated character of Ibn Rushd's Averroism, Anna Akasoy revisits the topic of 'the possible Averroist identity of Ibn Rushd.' She draws the attention of historians of medieval and early modern Averroism to the highly controversial nature of the current historiographic situation, in which sharply divided fronts of inquiry seem unable to come to terms with the results of their opponents' research: the 'Straussians', on the one hand, advocating a philosophically committed study of the history of philosophy, and the more philologically-alerted historians, on the other, who defend a study of Averroes's work centred on the documentary evidence provided by textual scholarship.[17]

Finally, with respect to the question of the dissemination of Averroist themes in the early Renaissance, besides the more evident intellectual reasons, one should consider three interrelated – technological, economical and institutional – aspects of the matter: the invention and diffusion of the printing press; the university establishment and its teaching methods; and finally, the rise of two philosophical literary genres, that of the philosophy textbook and that of the history of philosophy book. Charles B. Schmitt, in his seminal study on the 1550–1552 edition of Aristotle's oeuvre with Averroes's commentaries, published by the Giunta brothers in Venice (1550–1552), presented the work as a magnificent product of the synergy between book commerce and university-based philosophical research and teaching. In many respects, Averroes's popularity during the Renaissance greatly relied on his status as required reading in some Italian universities as well as on the growth of the printing press trade.[18] In this volume, Charles Burnett expands on the topic and returns to examine the famous edition by the Giunta brothers. As pointed out by Burnett, this edition represented the culmination of a particular way of reading and interpreting Aristotle, based on a systematic approach to knowledge, a particular emphasis on methodological issues, a predilection for philosophical arguments over questions of textual criticism, a very technical Latin jargon and little to no interest for the original Greek. Burnett looks at the prefatory materials as sources of information which may shed light on the cultural milieu that produced such a remarkable intellectual and material enterprise. He highlights the need to know more about the editors who prepared the texts for publication, such as Giovanni Battista Bagolino (d. 1552), Marco degli Oddi (1526–1591) and Romolo Fabio (fl. 1550s)[19] and compares the various editions (1550–1552, 1562, 1574, and another Venice reprint in 1560, but

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[17] Anna Akasoy, 'Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist?', in this volume.

[18] Charles B. Schmitt, 'Renaissance Averroism Studied through the Venetian Editions of Aristotle-Averroes (with Particular Reference to the Giunta Edition of 1550–2)', originally in *L'averroismo in Italia* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1979), pp. 121–142; repr. in Charles B. Schmitt, *The Aristotelian Tradition and Renaissance Universities* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), pp. 121–142; Copenhaver, *Ten Arguments in Search of a Philosopher*, p. 479.

[19] In 1676, in his *Les réflexions sur l'éloquence, la poëtique, l'histoire et la philosophie*, the Jesuit René Rapin (1621–1687) wrote that Bagolino, Mantino and Zimara went to excruciatingly great lengths to fix Averroes's Latin text because he had been unable to understand the original meaning of Aristotle's ideas. See Gregorio Piaia's chapter in this volume.

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by a different publisher, Comin da Trino). In particular, Burnett concentrates on the editorial work that Bernardino Tomitano (1517–1576) conducted on the logical books of the *Opera* and on the way in which different Latin translations of Averroes's commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* by Abraham de Balmes (ca. 1460–1523), Giovanni Francesco Burana of Verona (ca. 1475/80-after 1503) and Jacob Mantino ben Samuel (d. 1549) were organised and used in the various editions of the *Opera*. If in the first edition Bagolino and Degli Oddi managed to amalgamate the three versions into one Latin text, in the 1562 edition the text was distributed in three columns, an evolution that witnesses a deeper interest in expanding the philological and teaching resources of the text. Burnett concludes by contextualising Tomitano's contribution as a typical product of the philosophical and medical environment of the University of Padua. As a whole, the amount of work that Paduan teachers devoted to Averroes's and Aristotle's works on logic, especially the *Posterior Analytics* and its commentaries, is a clear indication of their interest in questions of method, from both a scientific and pedagogical point of view. What is more, we witness in Tomitano the slow erosion of the past tradition of reading Aristotle entirely in Latin, for he included a detailed philological commentary on *Posterior Analytics* in which the Greek text is cited throughout.[20]

Given the complex situation concerning the relationships between original texts, translations and editions, at times one has the impression that working on Latin Averroism looks more like an exercise in historical imagination, disciplined though it may be, than history of philosophy. And yet Ibn Rushd's writings and their European reception as Averroes's work are inextricably intertwined with the particular conditions in which they took their characteristic shape and the ways in which they were transferred to other cultural contexts. If we can draw one lesson from the study of the reception of the Averroan legacy and the historiography of Averroism, it is that we need to keep interpreting. Which in the end sounds like a characteristically Averroan precept, coming from a philosopher who deemed hermeneutical exercise to be a fundamental activity to preserve the cohesion of human communities and the growth of knowledge.

Who Were the Early Modern Averroists?

The question concerning the identity of Averroists appeared frequently in the annals of medieval and early modern philosophy, from Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). We have already hinted at the fact that Herder called Kant an Averroist an accusation hotly debated at the end of the eighteenth century. The hunt for actual followers of Averroes's philosophy, is, however, a different matter. Identifying real, historical cases of militant and practising Averroism presupposes that there existed among Latin interpreters of Ibn

[20] Charles Burnett, 'Revisiting the 1552–1550 and 1562 Aristotle-Averroes Edition'.

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Rushd a set of doctrines that could be described as unambiguously Averroist. In the last century, Fernand van Steenberghen described Averroism as an intellectual phenomenon that mainly belonged to the fourteenth century, for before that date even radical Aristotelians such as Siger of Brabant (ca. 1240–1280s) did not possess a sufficiently clear understanding of Averroes's contribution to Aristotle's work.[21] Recently, Dag Nikolaus Hasse has argued that 'Averroism became a movement in the fullest sense in the decades around 1500, when, in addition to all internal and external evidences, there is testimony of a doctrinal debate about the correct interpretation of Averroes.'[22] From this perspective, in order for a philosopher to be considered a fully-fledged Averroist, he (in the period in question it was always a 'he') had to be aware of the hermeneutical predicament underlying the reception of Ibn Rushd's work. Post-Rushdian Averroism and Averroists presuppose a condition of interpretative reflexivity, without which to be an 'Averroist' falls short of naivety, both in a subjective sense (Siger in Van Steenberghen's interpretation, for he didn't even know what to be a real Averroist was supposed to mean at the time) and in an objective sense (as a polemical straw-man, like in Ficino's use of 'Averroists' as mortalist Aristotelians).

For all these reflexive and exegetical intricacies, a set of doctrinal positions that may qualify the sense of what to be a medieval or early modern Averroist may mean in those periods can however be identified. We have already mentioned the most famous (and notorious) of these positions: the unicity of the intellect for all human beings, the eternity of the world and the theory of the double truth. John Marenbon has recently provided a useful working definition of the late medieval 'Averroist', which can be extended to describe his Renaissance counterpart. The Averroist, he says, are those Latin thinkers who

(a) accepted Averroes's view that there is only a single possible intellect;
(b) concentrated their efforts on reaching and examining an accurate account of Aristotle's ideas – usually based on that presented by Averroes – even where these positions are incompatible with Christian teaching; and usually
(c) adopted some sort of strategy to explain why they, though Christians, did (a) and (b).[23]

So who were the Averroists? In some cases, we have names. But more often than not, 'Averroist' seems to have been used as a generic tag to label a particular attitude towards Aristotelian doctrines. For some historians there has never been a single

[21] Fernand van Steenberghen, *Les ouvres et la doctrine de Siger de Brabant* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1938); Id., *Introduction à l'étude de la philosophie médiévale* (Louvain and Paris: Publications Universitaires; Béatrice Nauwelaerts, 1974), pp. 531–554; Id., *Maître Siger de Brabant* (Louvain and Paris: Publications Universitaires; Vander Oyez, 1977).

[22] Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Averroica Secta: *Notes on the Formation of Averroist Movements in Fourteenth-Century Bologna and Renaissance Italy*', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin*, pp. 307–331 (308).

[23] John Marenbon, 'Dante's Averroism', in *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke*, ed. John Marenbon (Leiden, Boston and Cologne: Brill, 2001), pp. 349–374.

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actual Averroist. Averroism was used as an Aristotelian bugbear to be agitated as a spectre of irreligiousness and metaphysical aberration. Later, especially after the Enlightenment, Averroes became a beacon of secular free-thinking and its acolytes were characterised as clandestine agents of demythologising rationalism. Given the many permutations that the term 'Averroist' underwent during the early modern period, it is perhaps easier and safer to identify actual Averroists who operated during the Middle Ages. Thanks to the research of Martin Grabmann, Anneliese Maier and Zdzisław Kuksewicz among others, historians have come up with a list of names: Gentile of Cingoli (fl. 1290), Giles of Orleans (fl. 1290), Ferrandus of Spain (fl. 1290), John of Jandun (ca. 1285–1323), Anthony of Parma (fl. 1320), Taddeo of Parma (fl. 1320), Angelo of Arezzo (fl. 1325), Matteo of Gubbio (f. 1330), John of Göttingen (ca. 1295–1340), Giacomo of Piacenza (f. 1340), Peter of Modena (fl. 1340), John Baconthorpe (ca. 1290–1347), Theodoric of Magdeburg (fl. 1350), Henry of Wesalia (fl. 1360), Hermann of Winterswiijk (fl. 1360), Hermann of Erfurt (fl. 1360).[24] Averro-sceptics, however, will always take advantage of the already mentioned hermeneutical predicament (Ibn Rushd-Aristotle-Averroes-Averroists) to question the real existence of both Averroism and Averroists. Facetiously, P. O. Kristeller once remarked that, '[i]f we call Averroists only those Aristotelians who agree with Averroes on the interpretation of every single passage in Aristotle, there hardly ever was a single Averroist. If we call Averroist any thinker who took any views from Averroes's commentaries, there hardly was a single Aristotelian who could not be thus called an Averroist.' Because of this generalised ambiguity in the use of the term 'Averroism', Kristeller's conclusion was that 'we are forced either to abandon the term Averroism altogether, or to limit it to those few thinkers who accepted the unity of the intellect, or finally to use it arbitrarily for that broad group of thinkers who pursued Aristotelian philosophy apart from theology and whom we might better describe as secular Aristotelians.'[25]

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[24] Anneliese Maier, 'Wilhelm von Alnwicks Bologneser Quaestionen gegen den Averroismus', in *Ausgehendes Mittelalter: Gesammelte Aufsätze geistesgeschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964–1977), I, pp. 1–40; Ead., 'Ein unbeachteter "Averroist" des 14. Jahrhunderts: Walter Burley', in *Ausgehendes Mittelalter: Gesammelte Aufsätze geistesgeschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964–1977), I, pp. 101–121; Ead., 'Die Bologneser Philosophen des 14. Jahrhunderts', *Ausgehendes Mittelalter: Gesammelte Aufsätze geistesgeschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964–1977), II, pp. 335–349; Zdzisław Kuksewicz, *Avverroïsme bolonais au XIVe siècle* (Wrocław, Warsaw and Krakow: Ossolineum, 1965); Id., *De Siger de Brabant à Jacques de Plaisance: La théorie de l'intellect chez les Averroïstes latins des XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Wrocław, Warsaw and Krakow: Ossolineum, 1968); Id., 'La découverte d'une école averroïste inconnue: Erfurt', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin*, pp. 299–306; René A. Gauthier, 'Notes sur les débuts (1225–1240) du premier "averroïsme"', *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 66 (1982), pp. 321–374; Luca Bianchi, '"Reducing Aristotle's Doctrine to Simple Truth': Cesare Crivellati and His Struggle against the Averroists', in *Christian Readings of Aristotle from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. by Luca Bianchi (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 397–424.

[25] P. O. Kristeller, 'Paduan Averroism and Alexandrism in the Light of Recent Studies', pp. 114–115.

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This point leads us to the heart of the difficulty concerning the identity of early modern Averroists. For some historians, such authors as Paolo Nicoletti of Udine, known as Paul of Venice (ca. 1369–1429), Niccolò Tignosi (1402–1474), the young Nicoletto Vernia, Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512), the young Agostino Nifo, Luca Prassicio (d. 1533), Antonio Bernardi (1502–1565) and Francesco Vimercato (1512–1571) can be viewed as loyal followers of the Averroist reading of Aristotle's philosophy. Other authors are Averroists in a much looser sense. In general, however, the picture seems to be far more uneven than labels such as 'Renaissance Averroism' may suggest. A variety of Averroist currents existed in the period: Sigerian trends (Alessandro Achillini, the young Nifo and Tiberio Bacilieri, who taught in Padua and Pavia in the early years of the sixteenth century); the intriguingly eclectic Averroism of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), mediated through a number of different sources; a form of Averroism we might call 'pragmatic', where Averroes's commentaries continued to be used as an indispensable teaching tool, as is often the case with Marcantonio Zimara (1475–1535) or even Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525); currents of mystical Averroism; Simplician readings of Averroes, full of references to Theophrastus and Themistius, as in Marcantonio Genua (1491–1563), Francesco Piccolomini (1523–1607) and Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576).

In all probability, the most popular version of Renaissance Averroism was the interpretation defined by Bruno Nardi as 'Sigerian', to which the Italian scholar devoted a series of important studies between the 1910s and the 1950s. According to Nardi, the solution that Siger had outlined in his *De anima intellectiva* around 1270 became the standard position among fourteenth-century Averroist masters of arts in Paris and Bologna.[26] In Siger's interpretation, the intellect was a separate substance, one for the whole human species, and was joined to single individuals through a substantial union, which constituted the form and final actualisation of the human being. Along similar lines, in the first half of the fifteenth century, Paul of Venice argued that the existence of individual intellective souls conflicted with the principle of natural economy (*natura nihil facit frustra*): the human species being one, there was no need to multiply countless intellects for each single human being.[27] However, the Sigerian explanation of the substantial union between the intellect and the human soul questioned the very unity of the human compound, understood as a vital and cognitive subject. In his *In libros de anima explanatio* (1415–1420), Paul of Venice summed up the problem by introducing the idea of a double soul: 'The human being, apart from the partial souls [vegetative and sensitive], has two total souls, i.e., the sensitive cogitative, which is generable and corruptible, that performs functions of inherence and information, and the intellective one, perpetual and

[26] Bruno Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano* (Rome: Edizioni Italiane, 1945); Id., *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence: Sansoni, 1958); Zdzisław Kuksewicz, 'The Latin Averroism of the Late Thirteenth Century', in *Averroismus in Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. Friedrich Niewöhner and Loris Sturlese (Zürich: Spur, 1994), pp. 101–113.

[27] Paul of Venice, *Summa philosophie naturalis* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1503), f. 88, quoted in Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano*, p. 125.

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eternal, that informs but does not inhere.' This meant that a human being is not human in an absolute sense (*praecise*) because of the cogitative soul, nor is he such because of the intellective soul, but as a result of both souls at the same time (*per amabas simul*).[28] Writing in 1518, after his 'Averroist phase', Agostino Nifo was still referring to the Sigerian interpretation when he described the Averroists as those philosophers who 'say that the intellective soul is a whole (*totum quoddam*) constituted by the intellect and the sensitive and vegetative principle.' Nifo introduced the term and notion of *semianima* to denote this particular view:

> The intellect is indeed a part of the intellective soul. They imagine that the intellect is as it were a semi-soul (*semianima*), which is one half of the intellective soul; the whole thing that is transmitted by the seed is the other half of the intellective soul. The intellective soul as a whole results from these semi-souls, as it were, and it is individualised (*numeratur*) in human beings, although the intellect, which is a semi-soul of the intellective soul, is one in number in everyone (*unus numero sit in omnibus*).[29]

In keeping with Siger of Brabant and Paul of Venice, Agostino Nifo considered the cogitative soul and the intellective soul as two distinct forms, but joined together so closely and intimately that they completed each other and constituted one single living and thinking individual.[30]

The greatest difficulty with the post-Sigerian model of the dual soul was how to explain both human selfhood and its vital union with the body. Are we all, perhaps, one single human being? Among the philosophers who in the Renaissance were more sympathetic to Averroes's solution, Achillini thought that he could circumvent the difficulty by claiming that, while reason is one in number for all human beings and acts as a *forma assistens* (i.e., acting from the outside, in a completely immaterial fashion, without informing the ensouled compound), this same reason constitutes as many different individuals as are the cogitative powers to which it is connected. In this view, the universal mind belonging to the whole human species was deemed to be instantiated by each individual's history of images and memories. Like Siger, Paul of Venice and the young Nifo, Achillini maintained that a human being had two forms, i.e., the cogitative faculty and the intellect, and that the cogitative form had sufficient cognitive capacity to be actualised by the intellect. In *De elementis* (1505), he acknowledged the dual status of human nature and that there were two 'principles of knowledge' (*principia cognoscendi*) in human beings:

> the one has a universal scope and it is the intellect, incorporeal, inorganic [i.e., with no corresponding anatomical seat] and incorruptible; the other is of a particular nature and it is the sentient power (*sensus*), a faculty in the body, with an anatomical basis, and it is the cogitative soul.[31]

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[28] Paul of Venice, *In libros de anima explanatio* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1504), fol. 46, quoted in Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano*, p. 118.

[29] Agostino Nifo, *De immortalitate anime libellus* (Venice: Ottaviano Scoto, 1518), c. 4, quoted in Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano*, p. 13.

[30] Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano*, pp. 13–20, 125.

[31] Alessandro Achillini, *De elementis* (Venice: Giovanni Antonio de Benedetti, 1505), f. 127^{r}b, quoted in Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano*, p. 245.

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Averroist philosophical anthropology, despite all its difficulties in preserving the identity of the mental-bodily compound (or perhaps precisely for this reason), vindicated human diversity. In keeping with Averroes, Achillini looked at the intellect as the culmination of the process of actualisation occurring in the human soul. However, he also insisted that a human being was not to be seen 'as the result of a simple form,' but as a 'very composite form' (*forma compositissima*). His conclusion was that humans had two natures: 'one is material and derives from the cogitative faculty, the other is divine and derives from the possible intellect.'[32] This dual model, quite common among Averroist Aristotelians of the period, and later appropriated and transformed by philosophers who were interested in providing the human soul with a naturalistic foundation, such as Bernardino Telesio (1509–1588), Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), was precisely the kind of solution that failed to convince those who advocated the human soul as both an individual self and a vital principle. Among the latter, Ficino maintained that the radical way in which Averroes had interpreted the notion of imagination had irredeemably disrupted the unity of the intellect's form. In his opinion, the idea of a form characterised by a dual nature – a *compositum* made up of intelligible species and *phantasmata* – remained an ontological monstrosity. What is more, because of its representative suppleness, the imagination had been made too relevant by the Averroists.[33]

Against the post-Sigerian model of the dual soul, with the imagination playing the role of a key faculty, Jacopo Zabarella (1533–1589), a later Aristotelian of the Paduan school, argued the opposite case:

> it is the last form [i.e., the intellect] that contracts and determines the previous ones [*imaginativa* and *cogitativa*], rather than being contracted and determined by one of these. Therefore, one should say that the rational soul determines and circumscribes the imaginative faculty rather than being circumscribed by it.[34]

It should be said that Averroes had clearly acknowledged that the cognitive scope of the imagination was not sufficient to grasp the content of the intellect. For Zabarella, however, Averroes and his followers had tried to solve the problem of how to explain the transition from the senses to the intellect by ambiguously (and illegitimately) expanding the powers of the imagination. In referring to the traditional distinction between *forma informans* and *forma assistens*, i.e., the distinction between the form that establishes a substantial union with the informed matter and the form that governs the subjected matter without being involved with the task of producing a material union out of the two entities, Zabarella argued that Averroes's model of cogitative power could not explain both the 'informing'

[32] Ibid., pp. 245–246.

[33] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, eds and trans. Michael J. B. Allen and James Hankins, with W. Bowen, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001–2006), V, p. 86.

[34] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 965A.

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and the 'assisting' operations of the soul. Averroes, he wrote, argued that the cogitative faculty (*cogitativa*) is a human being's specific *forma informans*, which defines the genus 'animal' as a human species (*quae dat homini esse specificum sub genere animali*), so that a human being is human 'because of this faculty, and not because of the intellect.' In Zabarella's history of the Averroist reception of Aristotelianism, medieval and Renaissance Averroists had contributed to transform Averroes's *cogitativa* into the highest form of imagination (*phantasia*), i.e., rational human imagination. In doing so, they could claim that 'this cogitative faculty of Averroes was in fact the imagination referred to by Aristotle.' Through the cogitative power, Zabarella pointed out, the Averroists had been successful in differentiating human from nonhuman animals. Being 'the highest degree of the imaginative faculty, indeed, the peak of the whole sentient part of the soul', the cogitative power constituted 'the very species of man within the animal genus and distinguishes him from the rest of the animals.' On the other hand, Averroes's attempt to save the specific nature of human rationality when compared with the intellect was for Zabarella much less successful. He reminded the reader that on that critical passage in Aristotle's *De anima* (III, text 20), Averroes had unambiguously embraced Themistius, who had characterised the 'passive intellect' as 'one in number for the whole human species', had 'placed in man another soul, subject to multiplication', and 'by this soul' had meant 'the imaginative faculty of man', which, in his opinion 'had the power to receive the intellect' and this was the highest perfection for man.[35]

Among the difficulties traditionally associated with the Averroist notion of the imagination, Ficino questioned the necessity to postulate that the intellect needed to borrow images from the cogitative soul of human beings, especially if it was true that the intellect 'always perceives bodies in their causes.' Indeed, if one looks at the matter from an Avicennian point of view, it would be more appropriate for the one mind to lend knowledge to us rather than for it to borrow knowledge from us. What is the point for the intellect to look for knowledge within our cogitative faculty? Will it become more perfect by lowering itself to the level of our imaginations? This cognitive lowering is certainly not an option for the intellect, for its descent in the hustle and bustle of sublunary life would be at variance with its lofty nature.[36] In the end, the whole process of clinging to human imaginations would represent for the intellect a degrading experience, or a ludicrously capricious activity, in which an allegedly eternal 'contemplator of things' chases and is chased by false images.[37] Provocatively, Ficino concluded his critique by asking why 'such a divine mind, like a lackey, will everywhere accompany this bumbling little man who hardly ever uses his own mind.'[38]

[35] Ibid., cc. 919–920.

[36] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V, pp. 113, 115.

[37] Ibid., p. 117.

[38] Ibid., p. 121.

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It Is In Fact All About the Intellect (but with Important Qualifications)

It cannot be denied that Averroes is mostly remembered in the history of Western philosophy for his theory of the unicity of the possible intellect – and rightly so, we may add, for two fundamental reasons: firstly, because the solution given by Averroes to the problem of human knowledge is indeed exceptionally sophisticated and original; secondly, for the very simple reason that, for an Aristotelian like Averroes, reality *qua* reality is in fact intellect. Aristotle's and Averroes's philosophies share the ontological view that intellect is the highest level of reality. And in both cases the identification of the intellect with the ultimate reality of things has important consequences in the domains of moral philosophy, logic and natural philosophy. Historians have privileged the field of philosophical psychology, but, as this volume will show, Averroes's ideas in terms of matter theory, cosmology, hermeneutics, religion and politics continued to resonate for some time during the early modern period. It is important to keep in mind that, both as a philosopher and as an interpreter, Averroes believed in epistemological realism and physical naturalism, and as a result thought – both in the sublunary human variety and in the supralunary nonhuman one – was supposed to mirror and reproduce the actual structures of reality. The intellect describes nature as it is in its real nature because there is demonstrative knowledge only of that which really exists.[39]

Averroes's corpus of exegetical and speculative works is marked by a distinctive level of logical stringency and systematic comprehensiveness. As we have already noted, these aspects contributed to the irresistible appeal of Averroism to the minds of many philosophers, from the Middle Ages to the modern period. This unique combination of rigour and abstraction, however, also led to a series of counterintuitive albeit cogent philosophical theses. It must be said that Averroes's demonstrations concerning the intellect in particular have something of an uncanny clarity, to the point that some of the conclusions read like excerpts from a bizarre book of metaphysical science-fiction. Here are some of the most unsettling tenets, in the form of a list: The material intellect is described as a 'fourth kind of reality' (*quartum genus*), being neither a form, nor matter, nor finally a compound of form and

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[39] On Averroes's noetics, see Miguel Cruz Hernández, *Historia del pensamiento en el Andalus*, 2 vols (Sevilla: Editoriales Andaluzas Unidas, 1985), II, pp. 71ff; Alan de Libera, 'Existe-il une noétique "averroiste"? Note sur la réception latine d'Averroès au XIII^{e} et XIV^{e} siècle', in *Averroismus in Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, eds Friedrich Niewöhner and Loris Sturlese (Zurich: Spur, 1994), pp. 51–80; Luca Bianchi, 'Filosofi, uomini e bruti: Note per la storia di un'antropologia averroista', in Id., *Studi sull'aristotelismo del Rinascimento* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2003), pp. 41–61; Antonio Petagine, *Aristotelismo difficile: L'intelletto umano nella prospettiva di Alberto Magno, Tommaso d'Aquino e Sigieri di Brabante* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2004); Richard C. Taylor, 'The Agent Intellect as "Form for Us" and Averroes's Critique of al-Fârâbî', *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics*, 5 (2005), pp.18–32. Campanini, *Averroè*, pp. 47–57.

Editor's Proof

matter, but a unique ontological hybrid, partly actualiser, partly receptor, capable, that is, of activity and receptivity at once.[40] This paradoxical activity of actualising while receiving, which can be extended to all immaterial forms, also known as intelligibles in actuality, can be seen as a coincidence of 'intellecting' and 'intellected' activity. If the intellect is the object of the very activity of understanding (for an intellect is a form in which the understood thing and the activity of understanding coincide), why does the intellect need an object that is different from the very act of understanding? From this point of view, Avicenna's way with the intellect seems more plausible than Averroes's. Moreover, what is the point of an external world? Even more puzzling, what is the point of an individual self? If the cogitative power is simply an evolution of the internal senses, are human beings really different from nonhuman animals? Why should the soul be united to the body? How can the human mind join the intelligences and even God's intellect? Would it be correct to say that ecstasy is the highest form of knowledge? These are all indeed quite extraordinary philosophical statements, and it is not surprising that they caused a certain stir among medieval and early modern philosophers.

Philosophers reacted to the paradoxical nature of some of Averroes's tenets by accentuating their radical aspect. Ever since Thomas Aquinas decided to counter the principles of Averroes's theory of the intellect by resorting to powerful images in addition to logical arguments, these images of a strikingly counterintuitive force grew into an established repertoire of loci communes in medieval and early modern philosophical literature: the intellect acts as a ghost ship, a mechanical contraption, a demon who possesses the mind of individual human beings, a wall capable of perceiving the colours that are reflected on it.[41] Ficino expanded on the anti-Averroistic imagery. He compared the Averroist intellect to a monstrous octopus with a giant head and countless tentacles which fall and grow incessantly in accordance to the individual imaginations on which it feeds. These images had the rhetorical function of highlighting the absurd claim that human thinking is the act of being thought by another intellect. Human beings do not 'intellect', they are 'intellected', and what is more, they do not even know that they undergo this unremitting process of 'being intellected'. Indeed, they are led to believe that they are in control of their own thinking activity. The absolute objectification and reification of human thinking – man is an object and not a subject of thought – was the aspect of Averroes's philosophy that was perceived almost from the very beginning in the Latin West as the most distasteful. In the first decades of seventeenth century, the Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639) could reiterate this point while defending the view that sense knowledge is more original than any intellectual abstraction: 'if the intellect understands, then we don't understand. And yet the intellect needs the species that derive from our senses in order for it to understand them by itself. Thus

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[40] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, p. 409; *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 326.

[41] See Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, in *Aquinas against the Averroists: On There Being Only One Intellect*, ed. Ralph McInerny (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 87; Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 928B.

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we will be the object and not the subject of understanding.'[42] In a way, the Averroist intellect, precisely because of its lofty and impassible nature promoted forms of radical sentience in the sublunary world and confined impersonal objectivity to the level of supralunary knowledge. [AU2]

This argument, it should be pointed out, has had a striking force of persistence in the history of philosophy and is closely connected to the recurrent charge of being anti-historical which has been levelled at the Averroist reason. Still in 1926, in the famous essay that Ernst Cassirer wrote for Aby Warburg's sixtieth birthday, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* ('The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy'), he interpreted Renaissance Averroism as the final outcome of hazily defined medieval tendencies towards 'objectification' (*Prozeβ der Objektivierung*). While for Cassirer the Neokantian, Petrarch (1304–1374) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) belonged to the side of the 'individual', Averroes was definitely a representative of philosophical views oriented towards the 'cosmos'.[43] Since Petrarch's times, humanists and moral philosophers have viewed the Averroist interpretation of Aristotle as a form of externalist drift towards the universal life of the cosmos, away from the soul and its introspective focus. Objectification, though, does not mean objectivity. In keeping with Themistius, one of Averroes's powerful arguments in favour of the existence of one material intellect for all human beings was the assumption that, without presupposing the existence of this intellect, there would be no possibility of sharing the universal import of individual thoughts, there would be no correspondence between knowledge and reality and no possibility of communication among different minds. In the Arabic translation of Themistius's paraphrasis of Aristotle's *De anima*, Averroes had found the key statement that 'if we do not have one intellect in which we all share, then we also do not have understanding of one another.'[44] At the end of the sixteenth century, Zabarella summed up the point in the following way:

> If the passive (*patibilis*) intellect is multiplied, then the various acts of understanding (*intellectiones*), too, are multiplied, that is to say, my and your understanding of the same thing will be entirely different in number. If this is the case, it also follows that an intelligible presupposes an intelligible and that, too, implies another intelligible, in an infinite regress.[45]

[42] Campanella, *Del senso delle cose e della magia*, p. 84: 's'egli intende, non intendemo noi; ma le spezie del nostro senso servono a lui per intenderle da sé, e noi saremo oggetto, non soggetto d'intendimento.'

[43] Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1927), pp. 133–149; Id. *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. M. Domandi (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), pp. 126–141.

[44] *An Arabic Translation of Themistius' Commentary on Aristotle's* De Anima, ed. M. C. Lyons (Oxford: Cassirer, 1973), pp. 188–189; quoted by Richard C. Taylor, in his 'Intelligibles in Act in Averroes', p. 128.

[45] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 963CDE. See also Alessandro Achillini, *Quolibeta de intelligentiis* (Bologna: Benedetto Faelli, 1494), fol. 10, quoted in Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano*, p. 204; Campanella, *Del senso delle cose e della magia*, p. 84: 'seguirà che, uno intendendo una cosa, tutti l'intenderiano per l'unità dell'intelletto.'

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The result indicated by Zabarella amounted to a dramatic crisis of intelligibility at the very heart of the theory of knowledge. To quote Zabarella again: 'my act of understanding is not yours, and when I understand, other men do not necessarily understand the same thing.' Averroes thought he could solve this difficulty by maintaining the diversity and multiplicity of human imaginations on the one hand, and by resorting to the unity of the intellect to unify their scattered *intentiones*, on the other. As aptly recapitulated by Zabarella, 'the intellect in many human beings is one … their imaginations are different.'[46] However, for all cognitive acrobatics imposed on the imagination, in Averroes's cosmos at the end of the day individual human beings seemed to be left without a real thinking faculty. They acquired knowledge of the world through the *cogitativa*, but 'cogitating' for Averroes was not the same as 'thinking'. In the sublunary world the cogitative faculty is the culmination of the representative activity of the senses, both external and internal. Within the sphere of animal sentience, the *cogitativa* is what makes the human being a living creature that is different from both nonhuman earthly animals and nonhuman celestial animals. On this point, the difference with Pomponazzi is subtle but clear: for Pomponazzi, although human beings cannot think without relying on their imaginations, nevertheless, their thinking remains a form of intellectual activity; for Averroes, the imagination is still an indispensable provider of objects, but it remains a surrogate of thought, the most refined form of animal knowledge in the sublunary world.

It then becomes clear why Ficino criticized Averroes so harshly for reducing 'the images of things shining in the cogitative power' to mere 'occasions' for the mind to understand.[47] In doing so, Averroes had transformed human knowledge into an unstable, provisional and episodic flow of images conveyed by the cogitative faculty. If one accepted the premises of Averroes's explanation, Ficino went on, then human beings were constantly feeding the one mind with their imaginary worlds, unaware of their role as indefatigable suppliers of images.[48] As if manipulated by the intellect, human imaginations were part of a grand cosmological plan meant to bring the material intellect of the sublunary world to full actualisation. The cunning of supralunary reason proceeded through the absorption of sublunary imaginations. This intellect, portrayed by Ficino as an insatiable mind that scanned and scoured men's cogitative recesses in search of all sorts of information concerning the world of nature and human beings, went so far as to pry into the mind of the wisest of men in order to increase the level of intelligibility in the sublunary world. In the great scheme of things, the sages of humankind turned therefore into accomplices in a process of universal enlightenment rather than conscious and responsible thinking subjects.[49]

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[46] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 965D: 'unus sit intellectus in pluribus hominum … phantasmata in iis diversa sunt.'

[47] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V, pp. 19–21.

[48] Ibid., p. 22.

[49] Ibid., p. 25.

Editor's Proof

The End of the Intellect

As already pointed out, it cannot be denied that, as a form of Aristotelianism, Averroes's philosophy is centred on the intellect and that the intellect is in the end the highest reality. And yet we should always resist the temptation to reduce Averroes's philosophy and Averroism as a philosophical current to a mere epistemological account of the intellect. Indeed, one of the reasons why tracing the evolution of Averroist ideas during the early modern period matters from both a historical and a philosophical point of view is that this development signals the end of a certain way of understanding the intellect and its role in both human knowledge and the universe. As Luca Bianchi and Eugenio Randi remind us, 'Aristotelianism came with a physics and a cosmology, and this was precisely one of the principal reasons for its success'.[50] The end of the intellect, understood as the principle of intelligibility of both the sublunary and supralunary worlds, meant therefore the end of a cosmological link between *knowledge* and *reality*. Galilean, Cartesian and Lockean standards of intelligibility (to mention only a few) contributed to releasing the intellect from its cosmological duties, transforming metaphysics into a set of epistemological problems. In this, the evolution of the Averroist intellect in early modern thought is part of a larger story concerning the gradual dissociation of reality from the very conditions of its intelligibility. As aptly put by F. Edward Cranz, 'the experience of what was called the intellect changed so fundamentally between the late ancient period and the Renaissance that the discussions took place between within two almost completely different contexts of experience', on the one hand a universe of things, on the other, a universe of meanings (*intentiones*): 'the single realm of Greek thought and experience is split into the two medieval-modern universes of meanings and things.'[51]

It must be said that the strong emphasis placed by the Renaissance Averroists on the nonhuman character of the intellect contributed to extending the gap between the human soul and the universal conditions of intelligibility. By inserting the cogitative faculty among the internal senses of the human soul, Averroes's followers confirmed the rift between the theory of the intellect and the theory of the soul: the intellect does not belong to human beings, whose cognitive expertise consists in a cogitative elaboration of sense perceptions. Again, early modern Averroism could foster empiricism in the field of human and natural knowledge, while relegating the intellect to the rarefied regions of supralunary metaphysics. Ficino was convinced that one of the most abhorrent consequences resulting from the Averroist model of the mind was a general flattening of the intellectual life of the universe, such that 'the higher forms are in a manner remitted and driven down towards the lower forms', while 'the lower forms are intensified and lifted up towards the higher.'[52] In other words, Averroes's *copulatio* (i.e., the connection between the human soul and

[50] Luca Bianchi and Eugenio Randi, *Le verità dissonanti* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1990), p. 5.

[51] Cranz, 'Two Debates about the Intellect', pp. 1, 12.

[52] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, V, p. 121.

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the intellect) came with a (not so hidden) agenda concerning a thorough naturalization of the intellect.

An even more dramatic consequence concerned the sense of reality resulting from Averroes's metaphysics of the intellect. If a condition of fully unfolded intelligibility is the end towards which the whole universe strives, and if true intelligibility is intelligibility without an object (for, as already noticed, the highest level of actualisation is the coincidence of the thinking subject with both its thinking activity and the object of such activity), what is the role played by objects, imaginations and matter in this ontological setting? Can we still say that in Averroes's theory of knowledge there is an actual sense of reality, in its physical presence? This question may be answered in the affirmative after all. This is particularly evident every time Averroes criticises Plato's and Avicenna's positions. Intelligibles for Averroes are always abstracted from sensible experience, not emanated from a transcendent intellect. In this view, human beings can reach and share stable forms of understanding by assuming that they are able to apprehend and abstract imaginations of things. No wonder, then, that religious exegesis, poetics and rhetoric play such a fundamental role in Averroes's philosophy. The simplistic assumptions that are usually associated with the doctrine of the double truth (dissimulation, hypocrisy, and reading between the lines) hide in fact a much more sophisticated understanding of the complex exchanges that occur between forms of divine, natural and human communication. While medieval and Renaissance thinkers were perfectly aware of this complexity, the interpretative quandary became increasingly less subtle during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when the question of atheism gradually replaced that of exegesis.[53]

In addition to causing the severing of the natural link connecting natural appearances to their intelligible counterparts, the end of the era of the intellect – an era that spans from Greco-Roman philosophy to the Renaissance – also marked the end of ascending and descending streams of intelligible energy holding divine, cosmological and human meanings together. This became particularly evident in the fields of moral philosophy, cosmology and matter theory. In all these cases, the intellect represented the common denominator between the natural and moral activities of the universe, and Averroes's original contribution as a thinker was that of providing a systematic and cogent explanation of such a connection. It does not come as too much of a surprise, therefore, that early modern philosophers could still be fascinated by the Averroist notion of mental happiness. Averroes's philosophy provided a model of rationality based on the notion of moral fulfilment as intellective consummation, the view of the universe as a self-sufficient system of hierarchically layered degrees of intelligible clarity and, finally, the concept of matter as an inherently and seamlessly extended matter.

[53] In this volume, James Montgomery provides an intriguing discussion of contemporary Straussian varieties of Averroistic inquiry. See *infra* 'Leo Strauss and the Alethiometer'.

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Averroist Happiness

Averroes's theory of intellectual beatitude as the ultimate foundation of moral life became particularly influential during the Renaissance. For Averroes, as Cardano acknowledged among others in his work on moral philosophy, *De utilitate ex adversis capienda* ('How to Gain Profit from Adversities', published in 1561), the supreme good coincided with *sapientia summa*, the highest level of contemplation accessible to human reason.[54] As tersely stated in the Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, human happiness consisted for Averroes in a state of intellectual clarity achieved through accumulation of knowledge and growth in awareness: 'it is necessary that a human being understand all the intelligibles through the intellect proper to him.'[55] When the possible intellect belonging to the human species as a whole fulfils its capacity by becoming *adeptus*, it joins the active intellect, i.e., God. At this stage, said Paul of Venice, the intellect, 'being actualised of all the material species, understands the active intellect through its own essence.'[56] This point was a central tenet in Averroes's philosophy, recurring in various parts of his system, from medicine to politics. In the *Kitāb al-Kulliyyāt*, Latinised into *Colliget*, Averroes's principal work of medicine, he confirmed that 'the perfection of the rational power lies in the apprehension of universals.'[57] In his *Commentary on the Republic of Plato*, 'man's ultimate perfection and ultimate happiness' was defined as ascension to 'intelligible existence'.[58] The Latin interpreters of Averroes came up with a number of words to indicate the final stage in the acquisition of universal: *copulatio*, *continuatio*, *coniunctio*, *connexio*. The kind of immortality that Averroes envisaged for the human soul depended on the extent to which the cogitative power was able to join both the possible and the active intellect, but this view of the intellect clearly left no room for the survival of the individual self in any form at all.[59]

[54] Girolamo Cardano, *De utilitate ex adversis capienda*, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Charles Spon, 10 vols (Lyon: Jean-Antoine Huguetan and Marc-Antoine Ravaud, 1663; repr.: Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1966), II, 24b.

[55] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, p. 500; *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 399.

[56] Paul of Venice, *Summa philosophie naturalis*, f. 91, quoted in Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano*, p. 130.

[57] Averroes, *Colliget*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1962), X, f. 17ᵛG: 'perfectio virtutis rationalis est apprehensio rerum universalium.'

[58] Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's* Republic, ed. Ralph Lerner (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 86–89.

[59] Marc Geoffroy, 'Averroès sur l'intellect comme cause agente et cause formelle, et la question de la "jonction" – I', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin*, pp. 77–110; Maria Corti, *La felicità mentale: Nuove prospettive per Cavalcanti e Dante* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983); Orlando Todisco, *Averroè nel dibattito medievale: Verità o bontà?* (Milan: Angeli, 1999).

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There is no doubt that a large number of Renaissance philosophers were intrigued by the particular way in which Averroes had explained the process of intellectual conjunction in his Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, a solution that for many represented one of the boldest views in his metaphysics. As made clear by Nardi, the 'conjunctions' were in fact three: one involved the union of the material intellect with the human body, of which the material intellect was the form; another *copulatio* was the one between the material and the active intellect; the third, and the most problematic of all, led man to join the active intellect.[60] According to Nardi, Siger's, Achillini's and Bacilieri's Averroism – the already mentioned Sigerian interpretation – assumed that the material intellect acted as a substantial form of the human body.[61] In this volume, Leen Spruit explores the Renaissance reception of the Averroist notion of mental happiness through an analysis of Agostino Nifo's *De intellectu*, in which intellectual happiness is contextualised in its cosmological and astrological framework.[62]

As in many other parts of Averroes's exegetical and speculative work, in this case, too, the imagination played a problematic and yet decisive role. As noted by Zabarella, the task of the imagination in the process of conjunction between human cogitation and the supralunary intellect(s) was particularly delicate. He referred without naming them to some Averroists who had distinguished between two types of human beings: 'the one is the man who is the soul constituted by referring to human imagination, imagination that Averroes called *cogitativa*;' 'the other is the divine man, who is constituted through the intellect and results from that man who is the animal species and the intellect that supervenes like some sort of divine form.'[63] At this particular juncture, Zabarella wondered whether, 'when the active intellect joins the *phantasmata* as a form, it joins them in the imagination (*phantasia*), or after they have been received in the passive intellect.' While some interpreters stated that the conjunction could not take place in the imagination – for otherwise the faculty of sensible representations would have been able to know 'quiddities' and universals – Zabarella saw the ambiguous wavering between the imagination and the intellect in human life as yet another instance of the problematic character of Averroes's theory of the intellect.[64]

From a strictly ethical point, the most problematic aspect lay in the remorselessly impractical and elitist character of mental happiness. In his *Quod reminiscentur* ('All the Ends of the Earth Shall Remember'), a grand project of missionary evangelisation conceived around 1616, Campanella rejected the thesis that the abstract

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[60] Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano*, p. 218.

[61] Ibid., p. 275.

[62] See *infra* in this volume Leen Spruit, 'Intellectual Beatitude in the Averroist Tradition: The Case of Agostino Nifo'.

[63] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 940BD. On the presence of strains of Averroistic mysticism in various examples of Renaissance thought, see: B. Nardi, 'La mistica averroistica e Pico della Mirandola', in id., *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI*, Florence, Sansoni, 1958, pp. 127–146. See ibid., pp. 213, 217.

[64] J. Zabarella, *Liber de mente agente*, in *De rebus naturalibus*, c. 1013.

Editor's Proof

intellect was being incarnated in individual human beings every time they were 'cogitating' and described this position as a characteristically Muslim view.[65] By contrast, unlike many of his contemporaries, Cardano did not question the plausibility of Averroes's lofty notion of mental beatitude. He stressed instead the heroic commitment at stake in this view of happiness as a form of intellectual contemplation to be reached in the course of one's life:

> Averroes, that wise man, in the proem to the [commentary] on the *Physics*, relying on the authority of Alexander of Aphrodisias, shows that man becomes strong by looking at human life as a point when compared to eternity. In this way he is not deprived of that happiness which consists in contemplation, and he is not unhappy because of the brevity of life. Otherwise he who is deprived of the hope of achieving this happiness will rather die than live.[66]

For Cardano, it was precisely the lofty nature of the target that made the human effort not only possible and open to every mind, but also sublime in its synthesis of relentless striving and intellectual perfection.

Matter, Intellect and Cosmos

The principle of mental *continuatio*, which, as we have just noted, is the cornerstone of Averroes's moral philosophy, presupposes a continuity among the intellects of the universe and occurs through streams of succeeding abstractions of *phantasmata* and *intentiones*. The material intellect is the intellect of humankind, the intellect of 'man' considered as the species 'human being'. Above this intellect, the series of celestial intelligences culminates with God's intellect, the unmoveable mover and fully actualised reality. Averroes's Aristotelian cosmos is populated with earthly and celestial animals. Earthly animals are further divided into sentient (nonhuman) and cogitative (human) animals. Unlike earthly animals, celestial animals are thinking and self-moving entities. Considered as self-movers, they are intentional. In the Aristotelian cosmos, final causality prevails over the efficient one. This means that celestial self-movers are souls. As explained in the Long Commentary on the *Physics*, 'the principle of motion relative to all moving things is like the soul in living things.'[67] To avoid infinite regress in the chain of moved and moving animals, there has to be an ultimate, self-initiating source of motion and knowledge in the cosmos. While the *primum mobile* rotates on its axis every day, the first mover is the soul of the outermost celestial sphere and cannot be self-moved, but remains

[65] Tommaso Campanella, *Legazioni ai Maomettani (*Quod reminiscentur*, libro IV)*, ed. Romano Amerio (Florence: Olschki, 1960) p. 99: 'tres Arabes machomettani, videlicet Averroes, Avicenna et Alfarabius putant intellectum copulari homini composito ex animali et cogitativa in unitatem personalem et toties incarnari intellectum abstractum, quoties concipitur homo.'

[66] Girolamo, Cardano, *De utilitate ex adversis capienda*, in *Opera omnia*, II, p. 24a.

[67] Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, f. 338^{v}HI: 'Principium enim motus de omnibus mobilibus est sicut anima de rebus vivis'.'

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completely unmoved. In this volume, the reader will find a discussion of the cosmological implications of Averroes's metaphysics in Nicholas Holland's chapter on Nifo's interpretation of *Destructio destructionum*, where the nature of celestial influence on the sublunary world is extensively discussed.[68]

It does not come as too much of a surprise, therefore, to discover that in a cosmological context (and as late as the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as Hutton's and Sgarbi's contributions, too, show in this volume), the one mind of the Averroists could be seen as the vivifying soul of the whole universe, whereby every soul has an external principle of celestial nature. The echoes of this variety of Averroistic monopsychism would later resonate in the works of Henry More (1614–1687) and Leibniz among others. In the *Commentarium magnum* to Aristotle's *De anima*, Averroes had argued that the first perfection of the sense faculty derives from the active intellect.[69] Still in 1737, André-François Boureau-Deslandes (1689–1757), one of the authors discussed in Gregorio Piaia's chapter in this volume, reiterated the cosmological and pantheistic features of Averroes's notion of the universal mind. Averroes, wrote Boureau-Deslandes in his *Histoire critique de la philosophie* (1741), considered God to be a 'universal intelligence', an 'ocean of spirits shared by each man.'[70]

From a cosmological point of view, the most perplexing aspect of Averroes's philosophy is the link between the intellect and matter. As is well known, the Aristotelian notion of prime matter refers to the potential and undifferentiated substratum that is postulated as necessary to explain substantial change. In *De substantia orbis* ('The substance of the celestial sphere'), Averroes defined prime matter as a substratum that is numerically the same for all things, but somehow already extended by virtue of an accidental form – quantity – which persists despite the countless transformations which matter undergoes at every moment. This view contributed to the late medieval and early modern transition from the prevailing scholastic view of prime matter as bare potentiality and pure non-extension to the idea of a material substratum that is constitutively quantified and indeterminately dimensioned. The consequences were momentous, not only for the development of scholastic physics, but also for its later implications relative to the early modern theory of matter. Averroes considered extension to be an attribute deriving from quantity, but he viewed quantity not as a mere accident of matter, but as one of its constitutive characteristics. Since no view of matter as one universal indefinite substratum with quantity as but an accidental form could explain the innumerable differences visible in the material world, Averroes thought that quantitative

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[68] Nicholas Holland, 'The Transmutations of a Young Averroist: The Account of Celestial Influences in Agostino Nifo's Commentary on Averroes's *Destructio Destructionum*'.

[69] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, p. 219: 'Opinatur enim quod prima perfectio sensus fit ab intelligentia agenti, ut declaratur in libro Animalium; secunda autem perfectio fit a sensibilibus.'

[70] André-François Boureau Deslandes, *Histoire critique de la* philosophie, où l'on traite de son origine, de ses progrez, et des diverses révolutions qui lui sont arrivées jusqu'à notre tems, par Mr D *** (Amsterdam: Changuion, 1737), III, p. 258.

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874 determinations should belong to matter. Only a consideration of matter as an
875 extended substratum could explain the variety and diversity of material forms in
876 nature. In *De substantia orbis*, 'one of the most important philosophical influences
877 on fourteenth-century conceptions of matter', Averroes theorised a view of mate-
878 rial reality as dimensional indeterminacy.[71] To avoid the contradiction of making
879 an accident (quantity) ontologically prior to substantial forms, he assumed that
880 indeterminate dimensions (understood as a sort of original accidental form) were
881 'coeternal' to prime matter. According to Robert Pasnau, the 'enduring substratum
882 of change, for the Averroist, is something rather like the Cartesian *res extensa*.'[72]
883 Pasnau argues that it is by virtue of Averroes's notion of matter as 'accidentally
884 quantified' that Zabarella could shift the discussion from Aristotle's *materia prima*
885 to 'indeterminate body'. There is therefore some foundation in the thesis that
886 seventeenth-century categories, such as body, extension and material corpuscles
887 are indebted to Averroes's notion of matter, which in the late medieval debate on
888 matter introduced the almost contradictory category of indeterminate extension. In
889 their views of nature and material change, Pomponazzi, Zabarella and Benito
890 Pereira (1535–1610) are for Pasnau examples of sixteenth-century philosophers
891 who followed Averroes's original solutions on matter. Pereira, for instance, in his
892 *De communibus principiis* (V, 18) defined '[t]he form itself of the quantity which
893 the matter possesses by its power' to be 'fixed, stable and immutable.'[73]

894 Averroes's point was that matter must have a form of primordial extension in
895 order to account for the innumerable transformations occurring in the universe. As
896 Campanella explained in his *Metaphysica*, matter can be seen as the principle of
897 all natural bodies because it is essentially endowed with dimensions, mutable as
898 they may be.

899 > In *De substantia orbis* and in [the Long Commentary on] *Physics*, book 1, having been
900 > convinced by the foregoing arguments [i.e., the ones adduced by Aristotle and Alexander of
901 > Aphrodisias], Averroes maintains that matter is not a body (*materiam non esse corpus*), and
902 > this in order not to contradict Aristotle, who says that matter is not an essence (*quid*), a
903 > quality (*quale*) or a quantity (*quantum*). However, he claims that matter has indeterminate
904 > dimensions that are original with and coeval to itself (*congenitae et coaevae dimensiones*
905 > *interminatae*), so that it can be divided and it is able to receive more forms in more parts of
906 > itself, and the reason is that without dimensions it would not be divisible. In this way, forms
907 > can be extended in it, actions, generations and corruptions may happen, and bodies can
908 > derive from bodies.[74]

[71] See Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes: 1274–1671* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), pp. 60–66 (62).

[72] Ibid., p. 64.

[73] Benito Pereira, *De communibus omnium rerum principiis libri quindecim* (Paris: Thomas Brumen, 1585), pp. 322–326, quoted in Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, p. 69. For a recent assessment of Averroes's view on matter, see Matteo Di Giovanni, 'Substantial Form in Averroes's Long Commentary on the Metaphysics', in *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century* (London and Turin: The Warburg Institute, 2011), pp. 175–194.

[74] Tommaso Campanella, *Universalis philosophiae, seu metaphysicarum rerum, iuxta propria dogmata, partes tres, libri 18*, 3 vols (Paris: Denis Langlois, 1638; repr. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1961), I, p. 178a.

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In Campanella's interpretation, the Averroist notion of material corporeity (*corporeitas*) was more than a simple accident; indeed, it represented a most original attribute, the very 'matterness' (*materieitas*) of matter.[75]

As demonstrated in the cases of mental happiness, cosmology and matter theory, Renaissance thinkers could look at Averroes's philosophy (in his work as both a commentator and an author) as an attempt to provide a comprehensive and unified view of human rationality, natural teleology and divine intelligibility. In all the fields of human learning in which he had left his characteristic mark, Averroes appeared to have been looking for ways of connecting the sphere of celestial and intelligible knowledge with the world of nature and matter. But there is a broader sense to *copulatio* in Averroes's philosophy, one that goes beyond the technical meaning of a union between the cogitative power, the material and the active intellect. In Averroes's cosmos, imaginations (phantasms) and concepts, the particular and the universal, reason and the intellect meet halfway, so to speak, for mere imagination would not be up to the task of seeing the universal, and the light of the intellect would be too intense to be received by the cogitative faculty of human beings. The view that material and immaterial reality intersect through a flow of representations exchanged between the intellect and the imagination is no doubt a very precarious notion, but it is a distinctive feature of Averroes's philosophy. What is more, for all the tensions that characterise the relationships between the intellect and the imagination, and despite the fact that these tensions confirm the remorselessly dual nature of human experience, the notion of *copulatio* and the way it was supposed to occur is a constant reminder that Averroes's metaphysics should not be seen as dualistic. Rather than assuming an unbridgeable gap between matter and the intellect, Averroes's cosmology of earthly and celestial animals presupposes an ongoing process of abstraction and dematerialisation through which countless intentions of reality are being unremittingly actualised in the form of intelligibles in act.

The Emergence of the Theologico-Political Question in the Early Modern Period

It is thus safe to say that Averroist rationality rests on solid foundations provided by an overarching concept of cosmological intelligibility. These foundations can be located in an array of intellects governing all the different spheres of reality, in a material substratum that is supposed to be continuous and extended throughout the sublunary world and, finally, in an unfailing process of never ending intellective actualisation. This is indeed a celebration of reason. And yet the most resourceful and appealing aspect of Averroes's view of reason resides in its ability to link even the most refractory element of materiality and contingency to a universal paradigm of intelligible continuity and fulfilment. In a sense, the distinguishing feature of

[75] Ibid.: 'nisi dicat Averroes corporeitatem idem esse, quod materietas, ergo substantia non accidens, ipsa nimirum materia.'

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Averroes's reason is communication. As Massimo Campanini argues in his recently published *Averroè*, the 'hermeneutical question' is central in Averroes's work.[76] This point became especially clear during the Renaissance, when religious divisions, conflicts divorcing theology from philosophy, and frictions between political control and intellectual expression intensified quite markedly throughout Europe. One of the most debated questions in philosophy was how to find ways of harmonising the universe of reason with that of faith. It is certainly no accident that during the Renaissance *Destructio destructionum*, the work in which the theologico-political import of Averroes's philosophy comes particularly to the fore, rose to prominence among philosophers and Aristotelian interpreters.

A few years ago, in his book on the philosophical poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes, Salim Kemal pointed out that, although in Averroes's view imaginations and representations do not have the same ontological and cognitive status as demonstrations, they nevertheless share with these the same syllogistic structure.[77] They are, after all, 'rhetorical' syllogisms. Averroes had clearly distinguished between the sphere of reality (the object of demonstrative knowledge) and that of interpretation (the domain of allegories, metaphors and images). In a descending order of both epistemological and ontological reality, human knowledge spans a wide range of degrees: demonstrative, dialectical, rhetorical and interpretative. In their own specific domains, the different degrees of knowledge produce different levels of certainty. Averroes was of the opinion that there were various forms of reasoning and that they could all be reconciled since, in the final analysis, they were consistent with the one truth. On the basis of this original kinship, the different kinds of reasoning could therefore relate to each other. Every time we are in the situation of judging and deciding about the validity of particular statements – this was Averroes's argument – we have a number of criteria to which we can appeal: agreement with reality, with a systematic account of things and with the linguistic uses of a notion (allegorical interpretation). In the absence of demonstrative certainty, when we assess the truth of a statement through dialectical or rhetorical means, we produce images and likenesses of things. The result is that, in the domain of sublunary reality (in terms of both being and knowledge), one cannot avoid dealing with the representative interface of the imagination. It is therefore necessary always to distinguish between good and bad uses of the imagination. For instance, to resort to the imagination rather than reason when we speculate about the origin of forms (*imaginatio super creationes formarum*) is inappropriate and leads men to believe that 'there are forms' (i.e., Platonic ideas) and that 'there is the giver of forms' (i.e., Avicenna's 'Colcodea'). It also leads the representatives of the principal revealed

[76] Massimo Campanini, *Averroé*, pp. 59–82. See also Ovey N. Mohammed, *Averroes' Doctrine of Immortality: A Matter of Controversy* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984); Richard C. Taylor, 'Averroes: Religious Dialectic and Aristotelian Philosophical Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and R. C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 181–200.

[77] Salim Kemal, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroës: The Aristotelian Reception* (Richmond: Curzon, 2003).

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religions (*loquentes trium legum*) to hold views such as that of the creation of things out of nothingness.[78]

In Averroes's universe, the imagination mediates between matter, human cogitation and the intellect. The imagination, however, also plays a fundamental hermeneutical role every time philosophical reason needs to mediate with knowledge coming from the political and religious spheres. A case in point, in which philosophy meets cosmology and theology through the offices of the imagination is Averroes's explanation of prophetic dreams and visions.[79] According to Averroes, the active intellect can pour intelligible forms directly into the imaginations of men through veridical dreams. Inevitably, the representational interface provided by the imagination particularises the universals descending into the soul. The process cannot be seen as a complete distortion, but it certainly limits the focus of the understanding, narrowing knowledge from the common to the individual, from the eternal to the historical, from the spatially unlimited to the local, from the necessary to the contingent, from the uncontrovertibly logical to the questionably cultural. In the *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, Averroes explained that 'man comprehends of such particular things only that which is peculiar to his own time, his own place, his own body and his own people and not those other particular things that are common to them through their universal nature.' The reason, he argued there, is that in this kind of *comprehensio* human beings can only rely on a 'preliminary' form of knowledge (*cognitio preparans*), i.e., a condition leading to *fides* – that is, assent and belief – in which the imagination produces representations of reality (*cognitio ymaginationis ymaginem informans*). This special kind of knowledge, Averroes continued, can only be about individual realities, and about individual realities of which imagining subjects have a previous knowledge and, most of all, in which they have a particular interest.[80]

Averroes was well aware that in interpreting human dreams it was crucial to emphasise the particularities of time, place, body and nation, for, like all other products of the imaginative faculty, dreams were communicated in a story, following the rules of a narrative frame. As Aristotle had already indicated in his

[78] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, ff. 305^{r}F-305^{v} GH. See Harry A. Wolfson, 'The Twice-Revealed Averroes', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), pp. 373–392.

[79] See infra in this volume Guido Giglioni, 'Phantasms of Reason and Shadows of Matter: Averroes's Notion of the Imagination and Its Renaissance Interpreters'.

[80] Averroes, *Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui parva naturalia vocantur,* ed. by E. Ledyard Shileds and H. Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1949), p. 111: 'Quare vero homo non comprehendit ex istis particularibus nisi illud quod est proprium suo tempori et suo loco et corpori et suis hominibus absque aliis particularibus communicantibus eis in illa natura universali; quare hoc est, quia necesse est ut homo habeat in hac comprehensione alterum duorum generum cognitionis que antecedit fidem, scilicet cognitio preparans, id est cognitio ymaginationis ymaginem informans, et debet antecedere fidem; et homo non potest acquirere istam cognitionem, nisi in individuis que iam prescivit, et maxime illa individua circa que habuit magnam sollicitudinem.' Averroes, *Epitome of* Parva Naturalia, translated from the original Arabic and the Hebrew and Latin versions by Harry Blumberg (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1961), p. 47.

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Metaphysics, a true philosopher approves of stories, and, famously, the subject of the inevitable limitations that characterise the imagination in its narrative functions is one of the central themes in Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670). An Averroist thread connects Aristotle to Spinoza, and, as Carlos Fraenkel shows in his chapter in this volume, Elijah Delmedigo's contribution to this discussion during the Renaissance was momentous.[81] Another author who followed Averroes's position on the question of religious truth is Cardano, who defended Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes from the accusation of dissembling their contempt for religious and popular views. In Cardano's opinion, they had all recognised the role of miracles and myths in establishing religious beliefs and had not tried to reduce their cultural and symbolical meaning to natural causes. In discussing this delicate question, Cardano referred to an important passage in the second book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: 'the philosopher, too, loves fables' (982b).[82] While Pietro d'Abano (c. 1257–1316) and Pomponazzi had not refrained from presenting the most implausible phenomena of nature (Cardano called them *imaginationes* in a derogatory sense) as events demanding a rational explanation so that they could further extol the explanatory powers of human reason, Averroes, in Cardano's view, had followed a very different path, attempting not to deny the existence of miracles, but to finds ways – both demonstrative and hermeneutical – to integrate them in the system of universal intelligibility. Most of all, he had not downplayed the role of human *fabulae* in establishing and consolidating social and political institutions. In this respect, Aristotle, Alexander and Averroes, Cardano concluded, were in fact 'much more pious than Pietro d'Abano and Pomponazzi.'[83] Seen as a surrogate for demonstrative knowledge and satisfying the narrative needs of human minds, the imagination could thus provide a much needed link between the otherwise incommunicable domains of nature and culture, intellect and matter. What is more, the flow of meaning that incessantly connected the supralunary and sublunary worlds was supposed to go both ways, for by definition the imagination is an amphibian faculty: it seizes the universal, while remembering the particular. Averroes conceded that the human power of cogitation could reach episodic but overwhelmingly clear perceptions of intelligible patterns every time the imagination was flooded by streams of intellective knowledge descending from above and accommodating themselves to the particular and historical conditions of the receiving imagination. In this respect, the work of the imagination, especially during special episodes of dream activity, is further evidence that the unremitting activity of processing intelligible meaning from sense perceptions remains one of the central features in Averroes's metaphysics.

As shown in the cases of prophetic dreams and intellective *copulationes*, the ability to see veridical images coming from celestial intelligences was for Averroes

[81] See *infra* in this volume Carlos Fraenkel, 'Reconsidering the Case of Elijah Delmedigo's Averroism and Its Impact on Spinoza'.

[82] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, in *Opera cum Averrois commentariis* (Venice: Giunta, 1562), VIII, f. 34^{v}: 'Et tu potes scire quantum facit consuetudo in hoc consyderando in legibus. invenies nam apologos et fabulas propter consuetudinem plus applicabiles quam scientiae veritates.'

[83] Cardano, *Contradicentia medica*, in *Opera omnia*, VI, p. 412b.

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one of the apprehensive functions of the cogitative power that distinguished human imagination from purely animal imagination. This demonstrated once again that, by introducing the notion of 'cogitative' imagination, Averroes and the Averroists had expanded the range of cognitive functions that could be attributed to the imagination. This dilation of the imagination – lamented, as we have previously seen, by Ficino and Zabarella – was particularly evident in all those cases where the imagination could be taken as a surrogate for belief. In his commentary to the second book of *De anima*, Averroes had confirmed Aristotle's view that the imagination was different from belief, for what we imagine is not necessarily the same as what we believe.[84] In commenting upon the difference (*alietas*) between the three virtues of *sentire*, *imaginari* and *consiliari*, Averroes explained that the act of *estimare* is not voluntary (we cannot believe as we like: 'impossibile est enim qui existimat non credit quod existimat'), adding that in this case a believer finds him or herself in a condition of cognitive self sufficiency (*omne credens sibi sufficit*).[85] When we 'estimate' (think, believe, opine), we think that something is or is not the case. Put otherwise, notions of truth and falsehood are involved in the act through which we form an opinion. This is not the case with the imagination (*non est sic ymaginatione*), said Averroes, and 'that is one of the arguments from which it is apparent that imagining is different from understanding.'[86] Another reason why the imagination is different from the act of believing, Averroes continued, is that 'when we form an opinion that something is very fearful, we are in some way affected by some affection, but not by the [same] affection as if that fearful object were present. Similarly, when we form the opinion that something inspiring courage is going to occur, immediately we are affected, but not with the sort of affection as there would be if that source of inspiration were actually existing.' This means that the faculty of the imagination, unlike the faculty of belief, is capable of suspending the act of disbelief.[87] Averroes acknowledged the limits of the imagination: 'belief always follows upon opinion, so, if imagination were opinion, it would happen that everything which imagines (*omne ymaginans*) would have belief', i.e., it would be convinced of the reality of what it is experiencing. However, many living subjects imagine, but 'nevertheless do not have belief.' For instance, 'none of the beasts have belief (*habet fidem*), although several of them imagine;' and 'everything which holds opinions is something which believes, and everything which believes is self-sufficient (*sufficit sibi*).'[88] Belief provides a level of cognitive self-reliance (*omne credens sibi sufficit*)

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[84] Michael Blaustein, *Averroes on the Imagination and the Intellect* (PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1984), p. 114; H. A. Wolfson, 'The Terms *Tasawwur* and *Tasdîq* in Arabic Philosophy and their Greek, Latin and Hebrew Equivalents', in Id., *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. by I. Twersky and G. H. Williams, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973–1977), I, pp. 478–492.

[85] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, p. 368.

[86] Ibid., p. 363; *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 278.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, pp. 368–369; *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 282.

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by virtue of which human animals surpass the natural and vital assurance of nonhuman imagination.

Following the principles of Aristotle's theory of the imagination, Averroes maintained that the line separating the sphere of the imagination from that of belief collapses only in two specific situations, either during dreams or in cases of delusion due to mental illnesses. In his *Colliget*, Averroes argued that someone can have distorted representations of reality when he has 'disordered thoughts (*corruptae cogitationes*) due to internal or external causes', so that 'he perceives through a state of altered perception (*malus sensus*).' People affected by this condition will see things as if they were outside their mind, right before their eyes. While prophetic dreams represent sudden injections of intelligible clarity into the sensible life of the sublunary world, ordinary dreams follow the same physiological route as hallucinations and depend on the work of the imagination. When one is asleep, one's senses are at rest and are only activated by representations released by the imagination and its allied internal senses. Averroes the physician, legal expert and religious exegete was well aware that conflicts and uncertainties in human relationships depend on the ability to control and judge the work of the imagination:

> [The] motion starts from the imaginative virtue as a result of the form that is being received all the time from the outside when we are awake, and that form comes from afar. The imagination first moves the common sense, the common sense moves the particular senses, and then the thing is perceived as if it were outside. This process that happens during sleep may also happen when one is awake, due to particularly intense cares we have about something. And as a result of this, the faculties of the soul become stronger, either because of some disease in the body, or because of fear or sadness, for then some vapour is released and it ascends to the brain and impresses there a form of the thing that has been processed by the thinking activity (*forma rei excogitatae*); and, by ascending higher and higher, it moves the animal spirit, and this motion arrives to the imaginative virtue, and this moves the common sense through the spirit, and the thing is perceived as if it were outside. And people believe that this is done by angels or demons.[89]

One could, of course, interpret this text as a characteristic example of demythologising material in an Averroistic sense, for demonic possession or angelic visions are explained through the physiology of the imagination. And yet, Averroes is more interested in the limits of the imagination than in its powers. It is significant to note that, regarding the ever recurring question concerning the extent to which one's imagination can alter one's body, Cardano is one of the rare Renaissance physicians who preferred to follow Averroes rather than Avicenna. In one of his medical *Contradictiones*, written at different times and published first in 1545, and then expanded in 1548 and (posthumously) in 1663, Cardano explained that by itself the imagination cannot alter the body (*pura imaginatio non immutat corpus*):

> It is necessary to clarify this matter and not to be deceived by the dicta of Avicenna. This is demonstrated by experience, for if someone imagines that he is healthy or that his son is dead, he does not recover from an illness, nor does his health deteriorate. But if he believes

[89] Averroes, *Colliget*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, X, f. 55^{r}AC. On the reversal of the ordinary path of perception in cases of dreams and illusions, see Blaustein, *Averroes on the Imagination and the Intellect*, p. 33.

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> (*existimet*) that he is healthy, he is greatly helped, especially in the case of lethal wounds and pestilential fever, for, if hope by itself is extremely beneficial, the feeling of being freed from anxiety (*securitas*) is much more effective, and so, to believe that one's own son is dead makes that man's health deteriorate to the point that sometimes he dies from believing that.[90]

Belief, rather than imagination, is what makes the apprehensive power of human beings capable of producing material changes in one's own body. What the imagination can certainly do, however, is give the illusion of reality. As we have seen, in the *Colliget* Averroes explained this process from a physiological point of view and clarified that these illusions could involve all five senses.[91] Cardano adopted the same explanation in *De subtilitate*, while examining episodes of intense daydreaming.[92] In this case too, Cardano's response to Averroes was particularly interesting. Because of the double nature of his interests, both as a philosopher and as a physician, he seemed to be among the few authors who during the Renaissance made use of both the metaphysical and the medical Averroes. Above all, every time he needed to account for the countless effects of the imagination over one's body, rather than taking the Avicennian shortcut – quite common at the time, especially among physicians – he preferred to adopt the Averroistic model of the internal senses, where the imagination – in a truly Aristotelian fashion – is mediated with belief and cogitation.

In Averroes's philosophy, intellect, cogitation, belief and imagination are the faculties involved in preserving the social and political cohesion of human communities through acts of interpretation and cultural mediation at different levels of intelligible clarity. Within the context of Averroist political theology, the place of religion is extremely complex, for the imagination – understood as the common currency of exegetical exchanges between such diverse domains as philosophy, politics and theology – is constantly being transcended by the critical intervention of reason. The truth of the matter is that Averroist *copulationes* are not the business of the imagination. It is precisely when it loses all the vestiges of its individual life (i.e., memories and imaginations) that the human soul connects with the active intellect, i.e., the highest level of rational transparency. This is the characteristic tension that pervades Averroes's philosophy and its later appropriations, a tension created by the polarity of faculties involved in the hermeneutical exercise of reason: the demythologising use of the imagination, on the one hand, and the divinising use of the mind, on the other. In one of his essays, Bruno Nardi once reported two jokes by Pomponazzi, one in favour, the other against the Averroists of his time. In his commentary to Aristotle's *Physics*, Pomponazzi criticised a certain compromising attitude in philosophy pursued by the friars, by resorting to macaronic Latin: *fratrizzare (idest miscere diversa brodia*, 'to *friarise*, namely, to mix

[AU3]

[90] Cardano, *Contradicentia medica*, in *Opera omnia*, VI, p. 478b.

[91] Averroes, *Colliget*, in *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, X, f. 55^{r}BC.

[92] Cardano, *De subtilitate*, in *Opera omnia*, III, p. 652ab.

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different kinds of broth', i.e., beliefs (*credita*) with natural truths (*physica*).[93] The meaning is clear: it is not appropriate to mix philosophy with theology, and Averroism, against the directions of Dominicans and Franciscans, participated in defining the question of the relationship between rationally demonstrated truths and beliefs in a more unambiguous way. Pomponazzi's quip on *fratrizzare* is a plain anticlerical jibe, in his typical style. His second witticism is instead an anti-Averroistic joke. In a passage from his commentary on the first book of the *Meteors*, Pomponazzi addressed the Averroists as 'these friends of mine' (*isti mei socii*) who, having reached the stage of the *intellectus adeptus* (i.e., the 'acquired' intellect achieved through a thorough study of the theoretical disciplines), 'have dinner with God and know everything' (*qui cenant cum deo et omnia sciunt*).[94] In a way, mixing broths and having dinner with God are the two sides of the same coin, i.e., the need to define what the boundaries of human reason are and whether human reason can reach a higher level of understanding, close to God's mind, if not God's mind itself. For Pomponazzi, 'friar-philosophy' had been led astray by an incorrect use of the imagination (the mixing of cognitive 'broths'), most of all, by misinterpreting what the ultimate principle of reality (God) is. However, he thought that the Averroist response to this question had been equally misleading, for it claimed that direct, unmediated, imagination-free relationships between the human mind and God (i.e., dinners with God) were in fact possible. The idea of such dinners, it should be remembered, didn't disappear from philosophical debates with the early disappearance of Renaissance Averroists, for knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis* continued to be discussed until late in the eighteenth century.

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[93] Pietro Pomponazzi, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS lat. 6533, f. 568^{r}; quoted in Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI*, pp. 96, n. 4; 276.

[94] Pietro Pomponazzi, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS lat. 6535, f. 120^{rv}; quoted in Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano*, p. 257.

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Author Queries

Chapter No.: 1 0001629562

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please confirm the opening and closing quote for the sentence "Reducing Aristotle's Doctrine to Simple…"	
AU2	Please provide the opening single quote in foot note of the sentence "oggetto, non soggetto d'intendimento.'…"	
AU3	Please provide the closing parenthesis of the sentence "*(idest miscere diversa brodia*, 'to *friarise*,…"	

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Part I
Middle Ages and Renaissance

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Chapter 2
Averroes Against Avicenna on Human Spontaneous Generation: The Starting-Point of a Lasting Debate

Amos Bertolacci

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Introduction

Among the legends on Averroes's life reported in Ernest Renan's *Averroes et l'averroisme* (1852), allegedly 'the most absurd' is the one that he draws from *De philosophia et philosophorum sectis* by Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577–1649) (published posthumously in 1658) and from the *Historia critica philosophiae* (1767) by Johann Jakob Brucker (1696–1770). The story goes that Avicenna went to Cordoba during Averroes's lifetime, and Averroes, out of hate, tortured and killed him.[1] The tale of Avicenna's presence in Cordoba and his killing by Averroes has a long history that goes back to the thirteenth century.[2] On a historical level, the legend in question is obviously wrong, since Avicenna lived more than a century before Averroes and never moved to Andalusia. The persistence of the account of

[1] Ernest Renan, *Averroes et l'averroisme* (Paris: Durand, 1852; repr. Paris: Maisoneuve & Larose, 1997), pp. 47–48.

[2] See Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, 'Survivance et renaissance d'Avicenne à Venise et à Padoue', in *Venezia e l'Oriente fra tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. Agostino Pertusi (Florence: Sansoni, 1966; repr. in Ead., *Avicenne en Occident*, Paris: Vrin, 1993, article XV), pp. 75–102 (pp. 80–83). At p. 83 of this study, d'Alverny reports a version of the legend, contained in a decree of Pietro Barozzi, bishop of Padua, of May 1489, according to which Avicenna would have succeeded in killing Averroes before being brought to death himself by this latter's poison. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Averroes in the Renaissance', in *Averroes Latinus: A New Edition* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), pp. xv-xviii (xvii), identifies the immediate source of Barozzi's report in the world chronicle by Giacomo Filippo Foresta (o: Foresti) da Bergamo (1434–1520). See also Akasoy in this volume.

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A. Akasoy and G. Giglioni (eds.), *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, International Archives of the History of Ideas Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 211, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-5240-5_2,
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Averroes's enmity against Avicenna, however, even after the chronological and geographical details of the latter's life had become clear to Western scholars, is significant at a philosophical level, since it represents the reflex – in which doctrinal confrontation is amplified to physical aggression – of an indisputable fact, namely, Averroes's actual 'affectation à contredire Avicenne,' as Renan says. The immense impact of Avicenna's philosophy on subsequent authors includes, besides countless instances of positive reception, also some noteworthy examples of critical attitude. Among the opponents of Avicenna, Averroes was certainly one of the most strenuous and radical.

Criticisms of Avicenna are frequent and widespread in Averroes's philosophical and theological works.[3] The piecemeal investigation of these criticisms accomplished in previous scholarship has not fully evidenced, and sometimes even obscured, the paramount importance that Avicenna's philosophy had for Averroes.[4] When, on the contrary, these critical references are considered more closely and studied cumulatively, they reveal Averroes's keen interest in Avicenna's thought, and his desire to formulate a systematic and definitive rejection of his philosophy.[5] This is attested by several facts. First of all, some of Averroes's treatises are openly devoted to the rebuttal of Avicenna's positions, expressing this intention in their titles.[6] Secondly, even in works whose anti-Avicennian aim is not explicit from the outset, criticisms are numerous, often repeated, and frequently accompanied

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[3] The case of the medical works might be different. Averroes's commentary on Avicenna's *Urjūzat al-* ibb, for example, allegedly shows a positive attitude towards Avicenna (see Renan, *Averroes et l'averroisme*, p. 48).

[4] Although some of them, singularly taken, have attracted the attention of scholars, a comprehensive list and an overall study of these polemical references is still a *desideratum*. The lacunae of the pioneering list in Marcantonio Zimara, *Tabula dilucidationum in dictis Aristotelis et Averrois*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1962), supplementum III, fols 42–43, are only partially filled by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, 'Avicenne en Espagne musulmane: pénétration et polémique', in *Milenario de Avicena* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1981), pp. 9–25 (pp. 15–24), and Miguel Cruz Hernández, *Abū-l-Walīd* MuÐammad *Ibn Rušd, Averroes: Vida, obra, pensamiento, influencia* (Cordoba: Publicaciones de la Obra Social y Cultural Cajasur, 1997 [1986]), pp. 371–375.

[5] Gerhard Endress, 'The Cycle of Knowledge: Intellectual Traditions and Encyclopaedias of the Rational Sciences in Arabic Islamic Hellenism', in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World*, ed. Gerhard Endress (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 103–133 (125), portrays Averroes's multi-levelled commentaries on Aristotle as an expression of 'the project to found an alternative encyclopaedia', to replace the one contained in Avicenna's works.

[6] See, for example, the logical treatises *Qawl fī 'l-*maḥmūlāt *al-mufrada wa'l-murakkaba wa-naqd mawqif Ibn Sīnā* ('Discourse on single and composite predicates and critique of Avicenna's position'), in Ibn Rushd, *Maqālāt fī 'l-*manṭiq *wa'l-ʿilm al-*ṭabīʿī, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-ʿAlawī (Casablanca: Dār al-nashr al-maghribiyya, 1983), pp. 87–94, and *Naqd madhhab Ibn Sīnā fī inʿikās al-*qaÐāyā ('Critique of Avicenna's doctrine on the conversion of propositions', *ibid*., pp. 100–105); cf. Tony Street, 'Arabic and Islamic Philosophy of Language and Logic' (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-language/), §1.4.2.

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by long and detailed argumentations.[7] This means that Averroes's attacks against Avicenna's positions are not occasional and incidental diversions, but represent a *leitmotiv* and an important target of these works. Thirdly, criticisms touch on all the main areas of Avicenna's philosophy, from logic to the different sections of natural philosophy, to metaphysics. Finally, Averroes often accuses Avicenna of fundamental flaws – such as linguistic misunderstandings, semantic confusions, methodological faults and recourse to unreliable sources – detrimental for the reputation of a thinker in general and a philosopher in particular.[8] This being the case, it is not far-fetched to say that Averroes's philosophy has two main poles: a positive one, represented by Aristotle, and a negative one, constituted by Avicenna. Albeit negatively, Avicenna is one of the most important sources of Averroes's system, probably the most extensively quoted, after Aristotle, together with al-Fārābī.

Elsewhere, I have provided an overview of all Averroes's criticisms of Avicenna in his Aristotelian commentaries, and a more specific account of those contained in Averroes's Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*.[9] In the present contribution, I wish to focus on the first criticism contained in this commentary, in the context of Averroes's exegesis of book 2 of *Metaphysica* (II, 993a30-995a20). At stake is Avicenna's doctrine of the asexual (so-called 'spontaneous') generation of human beings. In the general context of the confrontation between advocates and opponents of spontaneous generation, this more specific debate between Averroes and Avicenna deeply influenced Jewish thought and had a long-lasting impact on Latin philosophy until the Renaissance. In late medieval scholasticism and early modern

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[7] See Dimitri Gutas, 'Ibn Ṭufayl on Ibn Sīnā's Eastern Philosophy', *Oriens*, 34 (1994), pp. 222–241 (240). The attention that Averroes devotes to the rebuttal of Avicenna's positions is reflected in the care with which he discusses and refutes the doctrines of philosophers whom he associates with Avicenna. Charles Genequand, 'Introduction', in Ibn Rushd, *Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Lām*, ed. C. Genequand (Leiden: Brill, 1984; repr. 1986), pp. 1–58, contends, for instance: 'The care with which Ibn Rushd explains and refutes these objections of Themistius probably owes something to the use which Ibn Sīnā made of them' (p. 29).

[8] That Averroes's rebuttal of Avicenna's philosophy is wide-ranging and radical has been colourfully expressed by saying that Averroes is insistent, assiduous, even 'obsessed' in criticizing 'his own arch-enemy' Avicenna: the two expressions occur, respectively, in Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 311, and Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Spontaneous Generation and the Ontology of Forms in Greek, Arabic and Medieval Latin Sources', in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. Peter Adamson (London and Turin: The Warburg Institute and Aragno, 2007), pp. 150–175 (159).

[9] Amos Bertolacci, 'From Athens to Iṣfahān, to Cordoba, to Cologne: On the Vicissitudes of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the Arab and Latin Worlds during the Middle Ages', in *Sciences et philosophie: Circulation des savoirs autour de la Méditerranée (IXe-XVIe siècles)*, Colloque International SIHSPAI, Florence, Italy, 16–18 February 2006; Id., 'The "Andalusian Revolt Against Avicenna's Metaphysics": Averroes' Criticism of Avicenna in the Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*', in *Averroès, l'averroïsme, l'antiaverroïsme* - XIVe symposium annuel de la SIEPM, Genève, Switzerland, 4–6 October 2006. The texts of these two communications are in print in the proceedings of the aforementioned conferences (eds Graziella Federici Vescovini and Ahmed Hasnaoui; ed. Alain de Libera).

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philosophy thinkers assumed three main positions towards this debate: some upheld Avicenna's position, defending him against Averroes's attack (see, for instance, Pietro Pomponazzi [d. 1525], and Pomponazzi's students Paolo Ricci and Tiberio Russiliano); others, on the contrary, basically adopted Averroes's standpoint, although superimposing on it a distinction between Peripatetic philosophy and Christian doctrine foreign to Averroes and taken from John Duns Scotus (Agostino Nifo [d. ca.1540]); a third group of thinkers, finally, followed the so-called *via media*, already traced by Thomas Aquinas, pointing at the possibility of a middle course between the extreme positions of Avicenna and Averroes (Antonio Trombetta [d. 1517] in Padua, and Pedro de Fonseca [d. 1599] in Lisbon).[10] This variety of opinions shows not only the vivacity of the discussion triggered by Avicenna's and Averroes's confrontation, but also the importance of the philosophical options at stake behind the standpoints of the two Arab masters.

Elsewhere in the Long Commentary on *Metaphysica* Averroes attacks Avicenna's doctrine of spontaneous generation in general for implying the intervention of the Giver of Forms and for its Platonizing character.[11] In the criticism considered here, the disagreement on human spontaneous generation is dictated by a more markedly ontological point of view, since Averroes detects in Avicenna's position a violation of the principle of the necessary inherence of complex forms, like the form of man, in specific and structured matters, to the exclusion of more generic and basic material. Averroes's objections against Avicenna are mainly two: the first, implicit, is that human spontaneous generation is impossible; the second, explicit, is that the form of man cannot inhere in a matter, like elemental earth, that is much simpler

[10] For a historical overview, see Gad Freudenthal, '(Al-)Chemical Foundations for Cosmological Ideas: Ibn Sīnā's on the Geology of an Eternal World', in *Physics, Cosmology and Astronomy, 1300–1700: Tension and Accommodation*, ed. Sabetai Unguru (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer 1991); repr. in Id., *Science in the Medieval Hebrew and Arabic Traditions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), XII, pp. 47–73 (pp. 64–65); Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Arabic Philosophy and Averroism', in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 113–136 (esp. pp. 125–129); Hasse, 'Spontaneous Generation', pp. 155 ff. (on pp. 158–159, 161–162, Hasse touches upon Averroes's criticism of Avicenna in Text 1); Gad Freudenthal, 'Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Avicennian Theory of an Eternal World', *Aleph*, 8 (2008), pp. 41–129 (pp. 64–68).

[11] *d al-*ṭabī'*a*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1938–1948; henceforth: *Tafsīr*), Z.31, p. 882, l. 17–19 (Lat. transl. in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 181ʳB); Z.31, p. 885, l. 18 – p. 886, l. 3 (fol. 181ʳI); Λ.18, p. 1498, l. 12–15 (fol. 304ᵛG). In the quotations of Averroes's commentaries, the Greek letter indicates the treatise of Aristotle's work commented upon, whereas the following cardinal number refers to the section of Averroes's exegesis (thus, Z.31 means: treatise Z [i.e., VII] of the *Metaphysica*, section 31 of Averroes's exegesis). On these criticisms, see Genequand, 'Introduction', pp. 24–32; Gad Freudenthal, 'The Medieval Astrologization of Aristotle's Biology: Averroes on the Role of the Celestial Bodies in the Generation of Animate Beings', *Arabic Science and Philosophy*, 12 (2002), pp. 111–137; repr. in Id., *Science in the Medieval Hebrew and Arabic Traditions*, XV; Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Plato Arabico-Latinus: Philosophy – Wisdom Literature – Occult Sciences', in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, eds Stephen Gersh, Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Pieter T. van Wingerden (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2002), pp. 31–64 (pp. 42–45); Id., 'Spontaneous Generation', pp. 158–162.

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than its usual material is. The criticism in question, besides offering an insightful vantage-point on Averroes's ontology, is interesting in another respect: it can be taken as representative of Averroes's overall anti-Avicennian polemic, since it displays some important recurrent features of Averroes's critical remarks concerning Avicenna.

Text 1: *Tafsīr* α.15, p. 46, l. 18 – p. 47, l. 4 (Lat. transl. *In Aristotelis librum II [α] Metaphysicorum Commentarius*, ed. Gion Darms [Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 1966], p. 77, l. 25–30)

[a] Likewise, there are those who deny that specific forms are necessarily proper to their matters. Thus, we find that Avicenna, despite his famous rank in wisdom, says to be possible for a man to be generated from earth (*turāb*), as a mouse is generated [from it].

[b] This [view] – if he [indeed] held it and did not disparage it – is an [instance of] consensus with the people of his time.

[c] For this [mistake] – and many other similar things, whose enumeration would be too long – happened to him because of his familiarity with the science of the Ashʿariyya.

The three sections in which this text can be divided present three *leitmotiv*s of Averroes's criticisms of Avicenna. The first is the harsh tone and the *ad personam* character of the attack, witnessed by section [a], where Averroes expresses his amazement at an error that he regards as unworthy of Avicenna's alleged fame in philosophy. The second *topos* is Averroes's insistence in section [b] on Avicenna's agreement and consonance with contemporary thinkers, a fact that in Averroes's eyes evidences the profound gap separating Avicenna from the ancient masters, depositaries of authentic philosophy. Section [c], finally, is one of the many cases in which Averroes scolds Avicenna for being too conversant with, and receptive of, Islamic theology in general, and its AshÐarite version in particular, thus disregarding the requirements of true philosophy.[12]

In what follows, I will take all of these sections into account, showing how in each of them Averroes presents Avicenna's position in a peculiar and deforming way. In fact, ([a]) Avicenna does not uphold the specific version of human spontaneous generation that Averroes ascribes to him; ([b]) Avicenna's doctrine of human spontaneous generation is deeply rooted in ancient philosophy; and ([c]) his account of this doctrine evidences clear non-religious (and therefore non-theological) traits.

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[12] Ashʿarism was one of the major currents of Islamic theology, deriving its name from the tenth-century theologian Abū 'l-Ðasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935). In reaction to the theological rationalism that characterised the first great Islamic theological movement (Muʿtazilism), the numerous exponents of this school underscored dogmatic aspects of Islam that were at odds with a strictly philosophical world-view (such as God's absolute omnipotence and free will, and His constant agency in the order of natural events), thus determining an occasionalist perspective in natural philosophy and a strict observance of divine commands in ethics. On Ashʿarism, see Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ashʿarī* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1990). Averroes's choice of connecting Avicenna with Ashʿarism in particular, among the various schools of Muslim theology, seems an intentional move in his strategy of stressing the non-philosophical character of Avicenna's thought.

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The Matter of Human Spontaneous Generation According to Avicenna

According to Averroes's report in section [a], Avicenna upholds that, in the case of human spontaneous generation, the specific form of man (the form of humanity present in the sperm of the male parent) does not inhere in its usual proper matter (supposedly the menstruum of the female parent), but supervenes on a different, more elementary, substrate (earth). Section [a] deals apparently with a precise passage of Avicenna's works ('we find that Avicenna … says …'). The *locus* in question is in all likelihood a pericope of the *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* (*Book of the Cure*), Avicenna's most important philosophical *summa*; more precisely, it can be identified with chapter II, 6 of *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* (*Minerals and Upper Signs*), at the end of the fifth section of the *Shifāʾ* dealing with natural philosophy, in which Avicenna reworks a part of Aristotle's *Meteorologica* and endorses the doctrine of human spontaneous generation while explaining mankind's rebirth after a catastrophic event like a universal flood. In this chapter, Avicenna admits the possibility that animal species (including the human species) may undergo a process of asexual generation: in this process, the embryonic matter is provided by a mixture of elements determined by specific astral configurations, the protection that is usually guaranteed by the female uterus is superfluous due to the absence of environmental dangers, and the formative action of male sperm is replaced by a direct inflow of the form by the Active Intellect. This kind of spontaneous generation is for Avicenna an unusual, extraordinary phenomenon that prevents the total extinction of animal life on earth after the recurrent floods by which world history is allegedly marked.[13] This doctrine is absent in Aristotle and, although it may have been cryptically alluded to also by al-Fārābī before Avicenna,[14] it receives an extensive and coherent account only by the latter. Therefore, Averroes is substantially right in ascribing the doctrine of the spontaneous generation of human beings to Avicenna and in criticizing it as non-Aristotelian.

[13] The precise way in which Avicenna conceives the spontaneous generation of man in this chapter deserves a precise analysis, in the footsteps of Remke Kruk's numerous studies on the accounts of the phenomenon of animal spontaneous generation in Avicenna's thought: see Remke Kruk, 'A Frothy Bubble: Spontaneous Generation in the Medieval Islamic Tradition', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 35 (1990), pp. 265–282; Ead., 'Ibn Ṭufayl: A Medieval Scholar's Views on Nature', in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on* Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 69–89 (pp. 80–87); Ead., 'Ibn Sīnā on Animals: Between the First Teacher and the Physician', in *Avicenna and His Heritage*, ed. Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), pp. 325–341 (pp. 334–338).

[14] See *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū* Naṣr *al-Fārābī's Mabādiʾ Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-*Fāḍila, A revised Text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985; repr. 1988), ch. 16, §7, p. 270, l. 16 – p. 272, l. 3. In the commentary to this text (pp. 466–467), Walzer sees this brief passage as an expression of al-Fārābī's endorsement of the doctrine of spontaneous generation, although he remarks that such a doctrine is not fully compatible with al-Fārābī's usual description of human generation and his belief in the eternity of the human species. Walzer assumes that this doctrine, rejected as such by Aristotle (see p. 467, n. 836), entered in the Aristotelian tradition on account of the inner tensions between Aristotle's theory of becoming, on the one hand, and his views on biological generation, on the other.

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As to the specific doctrine of the spontaneous generation of human beings *from earth*, however, the evidence in Avicenna's works is more scarce. Indeed, if compared with the place of the *Shifāʾ* from which it is taken, Averroes's report of Avicenna's doctrine in section [a] is simplified in several respects. First, whereas in *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* II, 6 Avicenna maintains that mice can be generated from earth, he does not uphold the view that men are generated from earth in the same way as mice are. Nowhere in this chapter does he draw a parallel between the spontaneous generations of mice and human beings; he rather equates the spontaneous generation of mice with that of other non-human animals, like snakes, scorpions and frogs.[15] Second, in this chapter Avicenna points to the necessity of a particular predisposition (*istiʿdād*) of matter, given by a certain composition (*ijtimāʿ*), mixture (*mizāj*), and blend (*imtizāj*) of all the elements (ʿanāṣir, *arkān*), as one of the conditions of spontaneous generation in general, without connecting directly and explicitly the spontaneous generation of human beings only with one particular element (earth).[16] Third, he does not portray the spontaneous generation of animals as a direct and immediate effect of the mixture of elements, but contends explicitly that at least one or two further mixtures are necessary in order for the process to be completed.[17] Thus, earth and the other elements are only the *remote* material cause of the

[15] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ, al-*Ṭabīʿ*iyyāt, al-Maʿādin waʾl-Āthār al-ʿulwiyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿalīm Muntaṣir, Saʿīd Zāyid, ʿAbd Allāh Ismāʿīl (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li-shuʾūn al-maṭābiʿ al-amīriyya, 1965; henceforth: *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya*) treatise II, chapter 6, p. 76, l. 18 – p. 77, l. 4 (Lat. trans. *De diluviis*, in Manuel Alonso Alonso, 'Homenaje a Avicena en su milenario. Las traducciones de Juan González de Burgos y Salomón', *Al-Andalus*, 14 [1949], pp. 291–319 [p. 307, l. 3–9]): 'It is not objectionable that the animals and the plants, or some of their genera, passed away and then took place [again] through [spontaneous] generation rather than reproduction. For no demonstration whatsoever prevents things from existing and taking place, after their extinction, by way of [spontaneous] generation rather than reproduction. Many animals take place through both [spontaneous] generation and reproduction, and likewise [many] plants. Snakes (ḥayyāt) can result from hairs, scorpions (*ʿaqārib*) from clay (*tīn*) and lemon balm (*bādharūj*, *melissa officinalis*), mice (*faʾr*) can be [spontaneously] generated from mud (*madar*), frogs (ḍafādi) from rain. But of all these things there is also reproduction.'

[16] *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* II, 6, p. 77, l. 4–10 (cf. *De diluviis*, p. 307, l. 9–14): 'When this generation stops and is not attested for many years, it is not prevented from occurring seldom, when a rare heavenly configuration takes place without having been repeated until the present, as well as [when] a predisposition of the elements (ʿanāṣir) [takes place] that comes about only at every edge of a long time. On the contrary, we say that everything that is generated from the elements in virtue of a certain mixture (*mizāj*) is brought to exist as a species by the occurrence of that mixture because of the composition (*ijtimāʿ*) of the elements according to fixed measures. As long as the elements continue to exist, and their division and composition according to these measures is possible, the mixture resulting from them is [also] possible.'

[17] *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* II, 6, p. 77, l. 10–12 (cf. *De diluviis*, p. 307, l. 14–18): 'If the first blend (*imtizāj*) is not sufficient, but [the thing in question] is generated only by a second or third blend, as the animal is generated from the blend of the humours after that of the elements, then it is not objectionable that the second composition and the second blend takes place after the occurrence of the first blend without semen and sperm.' A second and a third mixture (*mizāj*) are mentioned also at p. 78, l. 3–4 (a passage omitted in *De diluviis*).

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spontaneous generation of animals, and in no way its only material factor; this general point applies *a fortiori* also to the case of the spontaneous generation of human beings.

Nowhere else in the *Shifāʾ* can an open endorsement of the doctrine that Averroes attributed to Avicenna in section [a] be found. The treatment of spontaneous generation in chapter XV, 1 of the zoological section (Ḥayawān) of the *Shifāʾ* contains only a generic allusion to the possibility that the human species becomes extinct (this time on account of atmospheric events) and that it comes back to existence by means of spontaneous generation.[18] The only case I am aware of in which Avicenna deals with the doctrine of human spontaneous generation from earth is the end of treatise 17 of the Ḥayawān of the *Shifāʾ*.[19] This passage, however, does not corroborate Averrroes's formulation of Avicenna's doctrine in Text 1 [a].

Text 2: Avicenna, Ḥayawān XVII, p. 419, l. 9–10:

He [*sc*. Aristotle] said: 'And indeed, even if[20] the generation of the forefather of human beings and the four[–legged] beasts occurred in earth (*fī* arḍ), they were generated[21] in this way [i.e. either by larvae or from eggs].'[22]

First and foremost, in this text Avicenna is speaking of the spontaneous generation of human beings 'in earth' (*fī* arḍ) rather than 'from earth' (*min* arḍ), that it to say, he is apparently taking earth as the place where human spontaneous generation occurs, rather than as the matter from which human beings were spontaneously generated, if the wording of the edition is to be maintained.[23] Moreover, in Text 2 Avicenna simply paraphrases Aristotle's hypothetical statement in *De generatione*

[18] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ, al-ʿṬabīʿiyyāt, al-*Ḥayawān, eds ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Muntaṣir, Saʿīd Zāyid, ʿAbd Allāh Ismāʿīl (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li'l-taʾlīf wa'l-nashr, 1970; henceforth: Ḥayawān), XV, 1, p. 385, l. 17 – p. 386, l. 5; Lat. transl. in *Opera in lucem redacta* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1508; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1961), fol. 59va. See Kruk, 'Ibn Sīnā on Animals', p. 336; Hasse, 'Spontaneous Generation', p. 155, n. 24.

[19] See Lutz Richter-Bernburg, '*Medicina Ancilla Philosophiae*: Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy *Ibn* Yaẓān', in *The World of Ibn* Ṭufayl, pp. 90–113 (98 and n. 21).

[20] Mss B and D of the edition report the variant *in* ('if'). The edited reading *wa-in* ('even if') is supported also by the manuscripts Leiden, University Library, ms. Or. 4, fol. 297^{r} and Leiden, University Library, ms. Or. 84, fol. 542^{v}.

[21] Reading *fa-takawwana* = 'he was generated', as in manuscript Leiden, University Library, ms. Or. 4, fol. 297^{r}, instead of *fa-sa-yakūnu* = 'it will be', as in the edition (cf. *fa-yatakawwanu* = 'he is generated' in manuscript Leiden, University Library, ms. Or. 84, fol. 542^{v}).

[22] Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *Opera in lucem redacta*, fol. 62^{vb}: 'Et dixit etiam si fuerit pater primus hominum et quadrupedalium generatus in terra, erit etiam sicut diximus.' The sentence that follows Text 2 (Ḥayawān, p. 419, l. 10; Lat. transl. fol. 62^{vb}: 'sed affirmationem huius determinabimus alibi') seems to correspond to the reference to *Historia animalium* occurring at the end of *De generatione animalium*, III, 11, 763b15-16 (cf. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals: The Arabic Translation commonly ascribed to* Yaḥyā *ibn al-*Biṭrīq, eds J. Brugmann and H. J. Drossaart Lulofs [Leiden: Brill, 1971], p. 133, l. 8–10).

[23] The edited reading *fī* arḍ is attested also in manuscripts Leiden, University Library, ms. Or. 4, fol. 297^{r} and Leiden, University Library, ms. Or. 84, fol. 542^{v}. The confusion between *fī* ('in') and *min* ('from') is, however, not unusual in Arabic manuscripts.

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animalium, III, 11, 762b27-32, according to which, *if* human beings and quadrupeds were generated from earth once upon a time, as some say (a reference to such *loci* as Plato's *Politicus* 269b, 271a), *then* one might assume that their generation occurred either by larvae or from eggs.[24] Averroes was in all likelihood familiar with this Aristotelian passage, since he is credited with a commentary on Aristotle's zoological works.[25] Therefore, Averroes could not take Text 2 as evidence that Avicenna was endorsing the doctrine of the spontaneous generation of man from earth, without ascribing *ipso facto* the same doctrine to Aristotle as well (an ascription that Averroes would certainly reject).

Avicenna's Sources in Ancient Philosophy

Studies on the medieval doctrine of human spontaneous generation have cumulatively shown its profound underpinnings in ancient philosophy. In Avicenna's case in particular, the overall setting of *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya*, II, 6 is dependent upon Greek sources: the doctrine of floods is reminiscent of the reports of catastrophic events that one finds in Plato's dialogues (see *Timaeus*, 22c-23b; *Laws*, III 677a-b)[26]; the spontaneous generation of lower animal species is taken from Aristotle's zoology (for mice, see *Historia animalium,* VI, 37, 580b30, cf. Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, X, 85; for scorpions, see Aristotle, fr. 367 Rose)[27]; Avicenna was also in all likelihood familiar with the tales regarding human beings generated from earth, which are recurrent in Plato's works (*Protagoras*, 320d-e, *Politicus* 269b, 271a), as well as in other ancient historians (cf. the reference to Erechtheus 'born from earth' in Herodotus, *Historiae*, VIII, 55), if not in their original formulations, at least in the reports that one finds in Aristotle's zoological works, where such tales are discussed and substantially dismissed (*De generatione animalium,* III, 11, 762b27-32).

[24] Cf. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals: The Arabic Translation*, p. 131, l. 4–6: 'One might similarly believe about the generation of men and of the four-legged animals, if their generation was originally from earth, as some suppose, that its beginning occurred in one of two ways.'

[25] Prof. Gerrit Bos is preparing the critical edition of the Hebrew translation of this commentary, several passages of which are discussed in Freudenthal, 'The Medieval Astrologization of Aristotle's Biology'.

[26] The dependence on Plato's *Timaeus* has not escaped the Latin translator, who entitles *De diluviis in Thimaeum Platonis* the Latin version of *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* II, 6.

[27] Snakes and frogs are not taken into account by Aristotle in the context of spontaneous generation; about the former he explicitly says, on the contrary, that they are oviparous (*Historia animalium*, VI, 1, 558b1). On Aristotle's theory of spontaneous generation, see James G. Lennox, 'Teleology, Chance, and Aristotle's Theory of Spontaneous Generation', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 20 (1982), pp. 219–238; Lindsay Judson, 'Chance and "Always or For most Part" in Aristotle', in *Aristotle's Physics: A Collection of Essays*, ed. L. Judson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 73–74 and n. 2.

Uncorrected Proof

Editor's Proof

Moreover, Averroes is well aware that Avicenna was deeply involved in the fiery debate prompted among Peripatetics by Themistius's interpretation of spontaneous generation, which Averroes regards as anti-Aristotelian because of the recourse to Platonic forms[28]: in commenting on a passage of *Metaphysica*, VII, 9 (1034b4-7), in which Aristotle explains this phenomenon only in terms of certain peculiarities of matter, Averroes criticises Avicenna twice for his agreement with Themistius and opposition to Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias; Averroes reiterates this criticism of Avicenna in a similar vein in his commentary on *Metaphysica*, book 12.[29] In other words, Averroes did not ignore that chapter II, 6 of *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* is constitutively dependent upon, and dialectically related to, Greek sources.

In light of all this, stating – as Averroes does in section [b] of Text 1 – that Avicenna's endorsement of the doctrine of human spontaneous generation (with the further qualification 'from earth' added by Averroes) is evidence of his agreement with his contemporaries seems excessive. Quite on the contrary, Avicenna's stand derives primarily from his philosophical lineage and, in particular, from his harmonising attitude towards the two main exponents of Greek thought, Aristotle and Plato, and the two major interpreters of Aristotle within the Greek Peripatetic tradition, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius; more specifically, Avicenna's position can be seen as a sort of synthesis between the Aristotelian tenet of the eternity of natural species, on the one hand, and the Platonic theory of the periodic extinctions of mankind due to natural catastrophes (which Avicenna takes as effectively universal), on the other; between the active role of the celestial realm in the worldly processes of generation and corruption, acknowledged by Alexander of Aphrodisias, and the theory of the emanation of forms from above in the sublunary world, suggested by Themistius. The consensus with the philosophers of his time that Averroes notices in Avicenna, if it really took place, is to be considered as a consequence of this wider and more fundamental theoretical option.

Thus, lacking any effective basis, Averroes's remark sounds like an ideological charge against Avicenna: in light of Averroes's project to restore the original thought of Aristotle in the commentaries on the latter's works, Avicenna's agreement with contemporaries is, for Averroes, tantamount to his distance from true philosophy. This accusation is complementary to another reproach that Averroes often raises against Avicenna, that of consciously distancing himself from, and therefore contaminating and corrupting, true Aristotelian doctrine.[30]

Uncorrected Proof

[28] The reliability of Averroes's interpretation of Themistius's position is not unanimously accepted: see the doubts raised by Genequand, 'Introduction', pp. 27–29, in comparison with the more sympathetic attitude of Hasse, 'Spontaneous Generation', p. 154.

[29] See the passages quoted above, n. 11.

[30] See, for example, the criticisms in the Long Commentary on the *De anima* Γ.30 (Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De Anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford [Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953], p. 470, l. 41–48), and in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*Tahafot at-tahafot*, ed. Maurice Bouyges [Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1930], p. 500, l. 12–13; Engl. trans. in *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut [The Incoherence of the Incoherence]*, trans. Simon van den Bergh [Oxford: Oxford University Press; London: Luzac, 1954], p. 305).

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Al-Ghazālī's Point of View

Previous research on Avicenna's doctrine of human spontaneous generation has rightly noticed its anti-religious vein.[31] In Avicenna's account, the extinction of human life caused by disruptive floods is really universal and, differently from the Biblical story of Noah and his family (as well as the Greek myth of Deucalion and Pyrra), spares no member of mankind. In this way, Avicenna seems to exclude both the notion of a providential God who preserves his dearest creatures from total disappearance and the idea of a divine justice that punishes evil persons on account of their deeds, so that sinful behaviour is extinguished in the world, while good persons are preserved to become the subject of a righteous covenant. If therefore Averroes affirms in section [c] that Avicenna's doctrine is a proof of his familiarity with Islamic theology, thus ascribing to Avicenna intentions that are totally alien to the latter's point of view, it is because he sees in the Avicennian doctrine expounded in section [a] an intimate link with religious and theological thought. No doubt, Averroes is alluding to the cursory references to God's creating mankind from earth in the Quran, whose scriptural model is the Biblical tale of the creation of Adam. But even this third contention, as we are going to see, is more problematic than it can appear.

In a passage of the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* ('Incoherence of the Incoherence'), Averroes states explicitly that the theologians hold the view of the creation of man from earth in which he comments on a specific pericope of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* ('The Incoherence of the Philosophers') of al-Ghazālī, a theologian whom Averroes frequently classifies as Ashʿarite.[32] In the first section ('discussion') of the second part of this work (the part devoted to natural philosophy, following the first part dealing with metaphysics), al-Ghazālī confronts the philosophers' dismissal of those occasional 'ruptures' of the regular connection of causes and effects that constitute the divine miracles.[33] In order to guarantee the possibility of miracles, in the second half of this first section he shows that certain miracles denied by the philosophers, such as the transformation of a staff into a serpent (with reference to Moses, Quran XX:17–21; cf. VII:107, XXVI:45) or the resurrection of dead persons (in the Day of Judgement), can be justified even on philosophical grounds, i.e., assuming the philosophical setting of causality. Two passages of this section are relevant to the present discussion. In them, al-Ghazālī resumes certain aspects of

[31] See Freudenthal, 'Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Avicennian Theory of an Eternal World', pp. 66–67.

[32] Michael E. Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory in the 17th Discussion of his *Tahāfut*', *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Delmar [New York]: Caravan Books, 1981), pp. 85–112 (99), aptly notices 'Averroes' repeated references in his own *Tahāfut* to al-Ghazālī's arguments as Ashʿarite.'

[33] This section is often referred to as the seventeenth discussion of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (see the article by Marmura mentioned in the previous footnote). On its overall doctrine, see Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, pp. 147–179, and the further bibliography quoted therein.

Uncorrected Proof

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Avicenna's doctrine of human generation and of animal spontaneous generation. However, he seems to exclude the possibility that human generation takes place directly from earth, neither does he appear to subscribe to Avicenna's doctrine of the spontaneous generation of human beings.

> Text 3: Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, A Parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by Michael E. Marmura [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2000], p. 172, l. 4–10; p. 173, l. 11–14)
>
> [a] Similarly, the raising of the dead and the changing of the staff into a snake are possible in this way – namely that matter is receptive of all things. Thus, earth (*turāb*) and the rest of the elements (*sā'ir al-ʿanāṣir*) change into plants, plants – when eaten by animals – into blood, blood then changes into sperm. Sperm is then poured into the womb and develops in stages as an animal; this, in accordance with habit, takes places in a lengthy period of time. Why, then, should the opponent deem it impossible that it lies within God's power to cycle matter through these stages in a time shorter than has been known? And if this is possible within a shorter time, there is no restriction to its being [yet] shorter …
>
> [b] Moreover, we have seen genera of animals that are [spontaneously] generated from earth (*turāb*) and are never procreated – as, for example, worms – and others like the mouse (*fa'r*), the snake (ḥayya) and the scorpion (*ʿaqrab*) that are both [spontaneously] generated and procreated, their generation being from the earth (*turāb*). Their dispositions to receive forms differ due to things unknown to us, it being beyond human power to know them.

Without entering into details, al-Ghazālī's main point in this text is that a possible explanation of the miracle of resurrection is congruent with the philosophical account of human generation, according to which elemental matter becomes, successively, vegetal life, nourishment, blood, sperm and – finally – a living being: the same sequence of distinct stages posited by the philosophers in human generation can be maintained also in the case of resurrection, with the only proviso of restricting the chronological span of their succession, i.e., positing the overall process as being – by God's power – much faster than usual and, in the last instance, instantaneous (section [a]).[34] The fact that some animals (like mice, snakes and scorpions), for reasons unknown to us, are generated in two different ways, both through procreation and spontaneously (section [b]), confirms that two types of human generation, differing in their temporal durations, are possible: the first, the one which we are accustomed to and which philosophers explain, takes place in a certain time; the second, performed by God on the day of resurrection, on the contrary, occurs instantaneously. In section [a], al-Ghazālī resumes some points of the standard philosophical theory of sexual human generation, shared by Avicenna and surfacing *mutatis mutandis* also in chapter II, 6 of Avicenna's *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya*. Like Avicenna, al-Ghazālī maintains that all the elements, not only earth, are involved in the process of human generation, and that this latter occurs through different successive stages. The overall view expounded in section [b], the examples chosen (three of the four animal species mentioned by Avicenna), and the terminology

[34] Although in section [a] al-Ghazālī does not mention explicitly human generation and refers simply to the 'animal', the reference to the 'raising of the dead' at the very beginning indicates that man in particular is envisaged when animal generation in general is discussed.

Uncorrected Proof

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employed, leave no doubt that al-Ghazālī is rephrasing here Avicenna's doctrine of animal spontaneous generation as presented in *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya* II, 6.[35]

The extent to which al-Ghazālī personally endorses the philosophical doctrines that he expounds in Text 3 – and, more in general, in the section of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* in which this text occurs – is debatable.[36] The following sections of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* attest that al-Ghazālī accepts the philosophical account of sexual human generation provided in section [a], which he qualifies as necessary.[37] Apparently, he does not reject the Avicennian doctrine of animal spontaneous generation at stake in section [b]: the *incipit* of this section ('we have seen') might even suggest a personal involvement in the thesis expounded. As to the Avicennian doctrine of the asexual spontaneous generation of human beings, by contrast, the remainder of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* certifies quite clearly that al-Ghazālī deems it contrary to religious law and, therefore, not acceptable, since, by positing several occurrences of this same event in the course of world history, it rules out the uniqueness of human resurrection expected for the Day of Judgement.[38] Significantly, the kind of human generation involved in resurrection in section [a] is not envisaged by al-Ghazālī as spontaneous, i.e. asexual, but as sexual.[39]

Significantly, while commenting on the pericope of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* corresponding to Text 3 in his own *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Averroes brings to the fore the ontological issue that characterises Text 1, namely, the question of whether a form can inhere in a matter that is simpler than its usual one. He contends that on this topic an unbridgeable divide separates theologians and philosophers: the theologians allegedly hold that a man can be generated from earth without intermediaries, whereas the philosophers deny this possibility. What Averroes says has important consequences for the problem of human spontaneous generation:

Uncorrected Proof

[35] See the passage of *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya*, p. 76, l. 18 – p. 77, l. 4 (cf. *De diluviis*, p. 307, l. 3–9), referred to above, n. 15. Text 2 is only incidentally taken into account by Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory', p. 95.

[36] See, for the specific points, the thorough discussion in Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory'. More in general, the *caveat* about the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* expressed by Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992), p. 11, n. 3 ('the work is craftily composed and one has to be careful in making any appeal to it as witness for what he [= al-Ghazālī] denies or for what he asserts') should always be kept in mind.

[37] Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), p. 222, l. 1–2: 'We admit that ascending through these stages is necessary for [the earth] to become a human body.'

[38] Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, p. 224, l. 5–9: 'If you allow the continuous generation and procreation in the manner now observed or the return of this pattern, even after a long time, by way of repetition and cyclical change, you have removed the resurrection, the end of the world, and what the apparent [meanings] of the religious law indicate, since it would follow that our existence would have been preceded by this resurrection several times and will return several times and so on, according to this order.'

[39] For al-Ghazālī's mention of factors akin to sexuality in final resurrection, see *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, p. 223, l. 8–14.

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Text 4: Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*Tahafot at-tahafot*, p. 540, l. 4 – p. 541, l. 3; *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, p. 332 [slightly modified])

[a] Only in regard to the things which have no common matter or which have different matters do they [i.e., theologians and philosophers] disagree whether some of them can accept the forms of others – for instance, whether something which is not known by experience to accept a certain form except through many intermediaries can also accept this ultimate form without intermediaries.

[b] For instance, the plant comes into existence through composition out of the elements (*al*-usÐuqussāt); it becomes blood and sperm through being eaten by an animal and from sperm and blood comes the animal, as is said in the Divine Words: 'We created man from en extract of clay (*tīn*), then We made him a clot in a sure depository' and so on till His words 'and blessed be God, the best of creators' (*Quran* XXIII:12–14).

[c] The theologians affirm that the soul of man can inhere in earth (*turāb*) without the intermediaries known by experience, whereas the philosophers deny this and say that, if this were possible, wisdom would consist in the creation of man without such intermediaries, and the creator who created man in such a way would be 'the best of creators' (*Quran* XXIII:14) and the most powerful.

[d] Both parties claim that what they say is self-evident, and neither has any proof (*dalīl*) for its theory. And you, reader, consult your heart; it is your duty to believe what it announces, and this is what God… has ordained for you.

This text is puzzling in many respects.[40] For the present discussion, its main problematic aspects are three. First of all, the sharp contrast between theologians and philosophers in sections [a] and [c] does not seem to grasp the peculiarity of Avicenna's position on human spontaneous generation, as Averroes sees it. The thesis that 'the soul of man can inhere in earth without the intermediaries known by experience' in section [c] is substantially equivalent to the doctrine that Averroes ascribes to Avicenna in Text 1 [a] ('to be possible for a man to be generated from earth, as a mouse is generated [from it]', i.e., without intermediate transformations of earth into more complex matter). Here, however, this thesis is attributed to the theologians, in distinction from the philosophers. Does Averroes silently equate Avicenna to a theologian on this issue, and transfer him consequently into the theologians' camp? This would be contrary to Averroes's habit in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, where the 'philosophers' often include, and sometimes designate exclusively, Avicenna.[41] But if Avicenna is one of the philosophers mentioned in Text 4, then Averroes, by stressing the philosophers' rejection of the theological doctrine of the generation of man directly from earth, contradicts his own report of Avicenna's position in Text 1 [a], where he ascribes to Avicenna exactly this doctrine. The philosophers' position in Text 4 is incompatible with Avicenna's position in Text 1 since these two formulations come from different sources: the former

[40] It is surprising, for example, that in sections [b] and [c] the philosophers are eager to quote Quranic verses in support of their view, and that the theologians' arguments are regarded by Averroes as equally unconvincing as those of the philosophers, since Averroes writes the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* in order to defend philosophy against its theological dismissal (section [d]).

[41] See, for example, the explicit inclusion of Avicenna among the Muslim philosophers in the ninth discussion of the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*Tahafot at-tahafot*, p. 407, l. 10–11; *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, p. 245), and the reference to the 'philosophers' advocating the Giver of Forms in the seventeenth discussion (*Tahafot at-tahafot*, p. 524, l. 9–11; *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, p. 320).

Uncorrected Proof

Editor's Proof

is al-Ghazālī's substantially faithful account of Avicenna's doctrine of human generation in Text 3,[42] whereas the latter is Averroes's deforming report of Avicenna's doctrine of human spontaneous generation.

Conversely, the dichotomy between theologians and philosophers in Text 4 involves a strongly interpretative account of al-Ghazālī's position by Averroes. If, as it seems obvious, Averroes includes al-Ghazālī among the theologians,[43] the thesis that 'the soul of man can inhere in earth without the intermediaries known by experience' does not reflect the text of the passage of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* on which Averroes is commenting: although the various stages of the generation process are taken by al-Ghazālī to be simultaneous in the miracle of resurrection, as we have seen, the human re-generation implied in resurrection remains for him a multi-levelled process (Text 3 [a]). The reason of the incongruence is that Averroes does not take the section of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* in which Text 3 occurs as an expression of al-Ghazālī's genuine thought, but as a dialectical 'concession' on his part to the philosophers' perspective[44]: thus, by stating that the theologians admit the possibility of humans being generated from earth without intermediaries, Averroes is formulating what he regards as al-Ghazālī's authentic position, i.e. the position that this latter would sustain if he were expressing his own point of view. However, this thesis remains Averroes's speculative reconstruction of al-Ghazālī's unexpressed thought: nowhere in the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* does the latter assert the thesis that Averroes ascribes to him and the other theologians in Text 4 [c].[45]

Finally, by quoting a passage of the Quran (XXIII:12–14) that allegedly supports the philosophers' position, rather than the theologians', Averroes indicates that the Islamic canonical text, and by extension Muslim religion, does not constantly sanction the doctrine of the creation of man directly from earth, but also provides an account of human creation that is at variance with the position that Averroes ascribes to the theologians in Text 4 and to Avicenna and the theologians in Text 1.

In other words, the contrast between theologians and philosophers on the issue of human generation in Text 4 results in a view too rigid in several respects: on the one hand, it cannot capture the essence of Avicenna's position, as Averroes sees it in Text 1, namely the 'middle' position of a philosopher influenced by theological motives, who thus escapes univocal classification; on the other hand, it rests on a subjective interpretation of what true Ashʿarite doctrine on human generation is likely to be, rather than on an objective pronouncement by al-Ghazālī in the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*; finally, it is shaken and blurred by Quranic textual evidence that, instead

Uncorrected Proof

[42] The Ghazalian background helps to explain why the philosophers in Text 4 are so eager to rely on the Quran.

[43] The fact that Averroes's use the term *turāb*, so often employed by al-Ghazālī (see above, Text 3), rather than *tīn*, as in the quoted passage of Quran XXII:12, to signify the 'earth' in the description of the theologians' position, is an indication of al-Ghazālī's inclusion among these latter.

[44] See *Tahafot at-tahafot*, p. 537, l. 9–16; *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, p. 326; Marmura, 'Al-Ghazālī's Second Causal Theory', pp. 86 and 92.

[45] Al-Ghazālī's contention in Text 3 [a] that 'matter is receptive of all things' cannot be extrapolated from its context: the rest of the text clarifies its meaning.

Editor's Proof

of corroborating the doctrine that Averroes ascribes to the theologians, is invoked by the philosophers in their anti-theological opposition.

In sum: the theological tendency that Averroes detects in Avicenna's doctrine of human spontaneous generation finds no support in Avicenna's original texts,[46] no *a posteriori* validation by al-Ghazālī, no firm basis in the sacred text and no constant and coherent acknowledgement by Averroes himself. We can therefore suppose that Averroes himself might have added the remark concerning the agreement between Avicenna and the theologians in Text 1 [c] in order to charge Avicenna with a further accusation: to have mixed demonstrative philosophy with dialectical theology – the latter being, in Averroes's eyes, a discipline of a lower level on methodological grounds – according to a recurrent motive of his criticisms of Avicenna.[47] A confirmation of this hypothesis can be found in the terminology of Text 1, more precisely in Averroes's use of the term *turāb* to designate the earth in section [a]. This term does not appear in the relevant texts of Avicenna.[48] It comes rather from the Quran, where it occasionally appears in the account of human generation, bearing the meaning of 'dust' or 'soil' rather than 'earth' (see Quran XXX:20). Significantly, *turāb* is the term that al-Ghazālī uses to refer to the earth in both sections of Text 3, and that Averroes adopts to describe the theologians' position in Text 4 [c]. In using this term to characterise Avicenna's doctrine in Text 1, Averroes thus transfers on Avicenna – either consciously or inadvertently – Quranic terminology and theological jargon, thus 'theologizing', not only in content, but also in vocabulary, Avicenna's original formulation.

Conclusion

Averroes's attempt to colour with theological traits Avicenna's doctrine of the spontaneous generation of man produces paradoxical effects: he ascribes to both Avicenna and to al-Ghazālī among the Ashʿarite theologians a doctrine of human generation *directly and exclusively from earth* that neither formally and explicitly endorses. On the one hand, the asserted resemblance between Avicenna's position and the occasionalism of the Ashʿarites is obtained by means of a substantial

[46] Richter-Bernburg, '*Medicina ancilla philosophiae*', p. 98, n. 21, sees an allusion to Adam's creation in Avicenna's expression 'the men's forefather' (*al-ab al-awwal li'l-nās*) in Text 2, which replaces the more vague reference to the primordial men (in the plural) in the corresponding passage of Aristotle's *De generatione animalium* (see above, n. 24). Adam's implication is, however, quite vague, and Text 2, on account of its hypothetical tenor, cannot be invoked to justify Averroes's approach.

[47] See, for example, *Tafsīr* Γ.3, p. 313, l. 7–12 (Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 67B-C); Z.31, p. 886, l. 2–4 (f. 181I-K); Λ.18, p. 1503, l. 9–12 (fol. 305 F).

[48] Avicenna's terminology resembles Quranic language in the occurrence of the term 'clay' (*tīn*) in the text of Avicenna quoted above, n. 15 (cf. Quran XXIII:12). But the use of this term in the context of the spontaneous generation of scorpions suggests that the resemblance is fortuitous.

Uncorrected Proof

Editor's Proof

simplification of Avicenna's position, and hides the clearly anti-providential tone of Avicenna's account of human spontaneous generation (in fact rejected by al-Ghazālī himself). On the other hand, the alleged admission by the Islamic theologians of a simplified type of human generation effaces al-Ghazālī's positive evaluation and personal endorsement of a more articulated and properly philosophical view on the issue, which surfaces as he explains the way in which human generation will take place in the final resurrection. In other words, both on the philosophers' and the theologians' side, the situation is less clear-cut than Averroes's account might lead to suppose: the straightforwardness of his report is more the result of intentional ideological simplification than of objective interpretative reordering.

Elsewhere I have documented that Averroes's intent to reject Avicenna's philosophy by stressing its distance from Aristotle conveys oscillations in Averroes's own standpoint on certain fundamental issues, since, while criticizing Avicenna, Averroes tends to portray his own positions as more different from Avicenna's than they actually are.[49] The present contribution shows, in a complementary way, that the same polemical intent – performed this time by shortening the distance between Avicenna and the Islamic theologians, rather than widening the gap between Avicenna and Aristotle – involves serious distortions in Averroes's description of Avicenna's stance, accompanied by a very interpretative account of the theologians' position. In light of all this, the parenthetical remark 'if he [indeed] held it and did not disparage it' that occurs in the middle of Text 1 (section [b]) might be revealing. Does Averroes with this statement want simply to show surprise in front of the enormity of Avicenna's error? Or does he rather manifest a certain perplexity in ascribing the doctrine in question to Avicenna? Answering this question is difficult, and not much help comes from the parallel place in Averroes's Long Commentary on *Physica* (chronologically anterior and preserved only in Latin translation), where, in the context of a similar criticism of Avicenna, no remark of this kind can be found.[50] The former alternative seems to be supported, besides the *locus parallelus* in the Long Commentary on *Physica*, by the general tone of the text, which remains

[49] Amos Bertolacci, 'Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence and the Subject-Matter of Metaphysics', *Medioevo*, 32 (2007), pp. 61–97.

[50] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Physica* Θ.46 (in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, fol. 387ʿH): 'Sed diximus ista contra negantes hoc esse manifestum per se [sc. quod illa quae inveniuntur casu sunt monstruosa, non naturalia]: sicut Avicenna qui dicit possibile esse hominem generari a terra, sed convenientius in matrice. Et iste sermo ab homine qui dat se scientiae est valde fatuus.' The Avicennian doctrine quoted here by Averroes comes again from *Maʿādin wa-Āthār ʿulwiyya*, II, 6, p. 78, l. 5–6 (= *De diluviis*, p. 307, l. 25–26): 'Certainly, if an uterus, for example, is [involved], this [process] is more continuous and effective; but if no [uterus] is [involved], it is not impossible for the intellect [to conceive this process] as occurring in virtue of other movements and causes.' Also in this passage of the Long Commentary on *Physica,* Averroes modifies Avicenna's original text, adding the mention of the 'earth' (*terra*) as the elemental matter of man's spontaneous generation. Since the Arabic original text of Averroes's Long Commentary on *Physica* is lost, we cannot exclude that the original version of this passage contained a remark analogous to the one in the Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*. For the doctrinal issues underlying this passage of the Long Commentary on *Physica*, see Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 154–156.

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highly critical throughout.[51] The latter alternative, on the other hand, would help to explain the very presence of the remark, which might otherwise appear superfluous: thus, by saying 'if he [indeed] held it and did not disparage it', Averroes would raise the doubt that the textual evidence of Avicenna's works may not fully support the doctrine ascribed to him in section [a], as we have ascertained.[52] Unfortunately, at the present stage of research this hypothesis cannot be corroborated and remains a matter of speculation. What is certain is that Averroes's deforming report of Avicenna's position – all possible provisos apart – seems to have been influential on subsequent authors,[53] until at least Pietro Pomponazzi in the sixteenth century.[54]

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[51] Elsewhere Averroes does not hesitate to reject the attribution to Avicenna of doctrines that he regards as spurious (see *Tafsīr* a.15, p. 47, l. 10–12; *In Aristotelis librum II [a] Metaphysicorum Commentarius*, p. 78, l. 37–38).

[52] In this case, Averroes would add some caveats on an account of Avicenna's doctrine of human spontaneous generation that he regards as too simplistic and incorrect, as it happens in the passage of *Tafsīr* a.15 quoted in the previous footnote. The doctrine of the generation of human beings from earth is present in a wide array of Arab thinkers, including the Ikhwān al-ṣafā'and Isma'ili circles – where it is associated with God's generation of Adam – Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn al-Nafīs . See Kruk, 'Ibn Ṭufayl: A Medieval Scholar's Views on Nature', pp. 83–84; Daniel De Smet, 'Scarabées, Scorpions, Cloportes et Corps Camphrés: Métamorphose, Réincarnation et Génération Spontanée dans l'Hétérodoxie Chiite', in *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in Honour of Remke Kruk*, eds Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan P. Hogendijk (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 39–54 (pp. 53–54); for the doctrine of spontaneous generation in the writings ascribed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, see Kruk, 'Ibn Ṭufayl: A Medieval Scholar's Views on Nature', p. 84 and n. 80. Noteworthy among them is Ibn Ṭufayl in Andalusia, since he might be regarded as the initiator of what I have called elsewhere 'Andalusian Avicennism', i.e., a vulgate version of Avicenna's philosophy in which some traits of the Master's thought are distorted and heterogeneous doctrines are added (see Bertolacci, 'The "Andalusian Revolt Against Avicennian Metaphysics"').

[53] Samuel Ibn Tibbon (c. 1165–1232), for example, in the philosophical-exegetical treatise *Ma'amar Yiqqawu ha-mayim* ('Treatise on [the Verse]: Let the waters be gathered [= Gen. 1, 9]'), ended in 1231, reports Avicenna's doctrine as if it implied the spontaneous generation of human beings from earth ('the generation of man *from earth* is possible, according to his [sc. Avicenna's] opinion'; 'according to him [sc. Avicenna], it is not impossible that, say, the species of man be annihilated and that subsequently, during the eternal time … a mixis will come to be *in the earth*, which is suitable to receive the human form', Engl. trans. in Freudenthal, '(Al-)Chemical Foundations for Cosmological Ideas', p. 65, emphasis added). Significantly, in the second quoted passage the phrase 'in the earth' is added to an otherwise substantially faithful report of Avicenna's standpoint. In this regard, Samuel Ibn Tibbon might have been influenced by Averroes, whom he quotes on the same subject in the same text.

[54] On Pomponazzi's ascription to Avicenna of the doctrine of the spontaneous generation of man 'from putrescent matter' (*ex putredine*), see Hasse, 'Spontaneous Generation', pp. 171–172.

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Chapter 3
Revisiting the 1552–1550 and 1562 Aristotle-Averroes Edition

Charles Burnett

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In the middle of the sixteenth century in Venice a remarkable publication saw the light of day: the most complete edition up to that time of the works of Aristotle accompanied by the commentaries of Averroes, with some supercommentaries by Levi ben Gherson (1288–1344), and related works. On the title page of the prefatory fascicle the name Averroes is printed in red, and is almost the same size as that of Aristotle, and the paragraph devoted to the works of Averroes is twice as long as that devoted to Aristotle (see Figure 1). I quote in full:

> All the commentaries of Averroes of Cordova on these works that have come down to us, and other books of his on logic, philosophy and medicine, of which some too, having escaped the notice of the Latins, have recently been translated by Jacob Mantino; others have been translated by the same scholar in a clearer and more faithful way than ever before, and the rest have been most diligently corrected in almost innumerable places from the manuscripts and the best printed books of the most celebrated philosophers of this time of ours, each having been adorned with a large number of marginal notes.

The edition is entirely in Latin, and represents the culmination of the tradition of understanding and interpreting Aristotle solely in the Latin language – a tradition which had began to be challenged in the late fifteenth century when the first publications of Aristotle in the original Greek started to leave the Aldine press (1495–1498).

There are two significant features about this publication that I would like to highlight:

1. The publication consists of 11 volumes and a prefatory fascicle. The title pages of each of the 11 volumes draws attention to the authors of the main texts included: Aristotle and Averroes, but are entirely silent about the editors who have corrected the texts and prepared them for publication. Moreover, if one

I am grateful for the help of Dag Nikolaus Hasse.

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ARISTOTELIS
STAGIRITAE
OMNIA QVAE EXTANT OPERA
Nunc primum ſelectis translationibus, collatisque cum græcis emendatiſsimis exemplaribus, Margineis ſcholijs illuſtrata, & in nouum ordinem digeſta: Additis etiam nonnullis libris nunquam antea latinitate donatis:

AVERROIS CORDVBENSIS
IN EA OPERA OMNES QVI AD NOS PERVENERE
COMMENTARII,
Aliique ipſius in logica, philoſophia, & medicina libri:
Quorum aliqui non amplius à Latinis viſi, nuper à IACOB MANTINO *ſunt conuerſi:*
Alij ab eodem clarius ac fidelius, quàm vnquam antea ab alijs, tranſlati:
Cæteri ex manuſcriptis, optimiſq; codicibus Philoſophorum hac noſtra ætate
celeberrimorum, innumeris penè locis diligentiſsime caſtigati:
Singuli complurib⁹ margineis ſcholijs exornati.

LEVI GERSONIDIS Annotationes in Auer. expoſitionem ſuper logices libros, Latinis hucuſq; incognitę, eodem Iacob Mantino interprete.

Græcorum, Arabum, & Latinorum monumenta quædam, ad hoc opus ſpectantia.

M. Antonij Zimaræ in Ariſtotelis & Auerrois dicta Contradictionum Solutiones.

IO. BAPTISTAE BAGOLINI VERONENSIS LABORE, AC DILIGENTIA.

Hæc autem omnia tum ex Præfatione, tum ex Indice Librorum clarius innoteſcunt.

BERNARDO SALVIATO EPISC. S. PAPVLI
ROMAE PRIORI DICATA

Cum ſummi Pontificis, Gallorum Regis, Senatuſq; Veneti decretis.

VENETIIS APVD IVNTAS M D LII.

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can trust the information on their title pages, volumes 2 to 11 were published in 1550 (hence the rather strange way that we refer to the date of the volumes: Venice: 1552–1550). So, anyone using these volumes would have no idea who had edited the texts in the volumes. This, I believe, is rather unusual. The sixth volume, for example, simply says that it contains '[a]ll the books of Aristotle the Stagirite pertaining to the knowledge of animals, with the various commentaries of Averroes the Cordovan on the same books, whose titles, number and order the verso page lists' (+ the printer, and place and date of printing).[1] Even the first volume, which has the date 1552 on its title page and gives more information on the editors, simply refers, in addition to Aristotle and Averroes, to the *annotationes* of Levi ben Gherson, some questions, and letters of certain Arabs. This lack of mention of the editors, however, is made up for by the other significant feature, namely:

2. The prefatory fascicle of 20 folios which gives in much more detail than is usual for the time, the whole rationale for publishing such a series of volumes and the history of their composition. Following one after the other we have

    1. Tommaso Giunta's dedication to Bernardo Salviati (1508–1568), the bishop of St Papoul (fols 2^{r}-4^{v}).
    2. Marco degli Oddi's preface, which consists of a general introduction to the transmission of Peripatetic philosophy, and then introductions to each volume (5^{r}-11^{v}).
    3. A poem by Luigi Luisini of Udine, the author of *Aphrodisiacus sive de Lue Venerea* (Venice, 1566) celebrating the work of Bagolino, the editor (beginning 'Tantum et Aristoteles Bagolino et Corduba debent / Quantum humus agricolae debet operta rubis …': 'Aristotle and Cordova owe so much to Bagolino as soil covered with thorns owes to a tiller …') (11^{v}).
    4. A letter of Romolo Fabi of Florence to the *Studiosi philosophiae* (12^{rv}).
    5. The permission of Pope Julius III (February 1550-February 1555) (13^{r}).
    6. *La Privileige du Treschrestien Roy de France HENRY .II. de ce Nom* (1547–1559) (13^{v}).
    7. The licence to print of Francesco Donato the doge of Venice (1545–1553) (14^{r}).
    8. Errata for all 11 vols (14^{v}).
    9. *Index librorum omnium* (with asterisks indicating the translations which have never been published before) (15^{r}-17^{v}).
    10. The life of Aristotle taken from Diogenes Laertius, *De vita philosophorum* (18^{r}-19^{v}).
    11. The life of Aristotle taken from Philoponus, which includes references to the *Conciliator* of Pietro d'Abano and Gilles de Rome (20^{rv}).
    12. The life of Averroes *ex libris Chronicorum a mundi origine excerpta* (20^{v}).

[1] Aristotle, *Omnia quae extant opera* (Venice: Giunta, 1552–1550), VI: 'Aristotelis Stagiritae Libri omnes ad animalium cognitionem attinentes cum Averrois Cordubensis variis in eosdem commentariis, quorum titulos, numerum, ac ordinem versa pagina narrat.'

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13. And a note 'ad lectorem' which looks as if it has been fitted in at the last moment before going to press, referring to other works by Averroes among the Jews and Arabs in Constantinople discovered there by Cardinal Bernardo Navagero: the Paraphrase of the *Physics*, the Middle Commentary on the *Physics* (of which the first three books are included in the volume), the Middle Commentary on the *De caelo* and the *De anima*, the Paraphrase of the *De anima*, the Middle Commentary on the last nine books of *De natura animalium*, the Long Commentary on the two books *De plantis*, the Middle Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the Paraphrase of the *Metaphysics*, and the Paraphrase of the *Almagest* of Ptolemy (20^{v}).

Tommaso Giunta's preface includes the well-known encomium of Averroes:

> When Aristotle dealt with principles, methods, and general things in such a way that he left many things to be inspected and investigated more carefully by others, the Greeks made little (or rather no) effort in doing this. But the Arabs, not content with mere translations, thought that the whole subject matter – i.e. the things themselves which had to be dealt with – should be investigated by them more carefully and fully. In this Averroes especially can be praised. His most solid teaching is not so much drawn from, as squeezed out of, the water-springs of the Greeks. He shone out so much that he alone rightly has claimed the name of 'Commentator' for himself. And now it should be clear amongst everybody who has practised philosophy in recent centuries that those parts of philosophy which had been omitted by Aristotle, have been investigated more carefully by no other person, and no one has established them on more solid foundations.[2]

Marco degli Oddi in turn described the editorial process in detail. The project was inaugurated by Giovanni Battista Bagolino, but he died (according to Degli Oddi) from spending too much time burning the midnight oil (fol. 5^{v}). Degli Oddi and Romolo Fabi, therefore, took over the editorial process. Nevertheless, perhaps out of respect for the inaugurator and main mover of the project, it is the name of Bagolino only that appears on the title page of this prefatory fascicle: '[the translations have been selected, compared, and corrected etc.] by the labour and hard work of Giovanni Battista Bagolino of Verona.' The process of choosing between extant translations, or commissioning new ones, or correcting the medieval translations is described volume by volume by Degli Oddi.

Thus we can see that the prefatory fascicle complements the 11 volumes: While the latter contain no indication of editors, editorial method, and the rationale for the choice of translations and interpretative works, the prefatory fascicle provides us with all this information, and to an extant which is quite unusual for the period. The question remains as to whether this prefatory fascicle was published separately from the other volumes. The dates on the title pages would certainly suggest that it

[2] Ibid., I, fol. 2^{v}: 'Sed cum Aristoteles principia, modos et quae generalia sunt ita tractasset ut aliis multa diligentius inspicienda ac contemplanda relinqueret, in eo Graeci parum admodum, ne dicam nihil, laboris sibi sumpserunt. At Arabes, non contenti nudis interpretationibus, materiam totam, hoc est res ipsas de quibus tractandum fuerat, multo diligentius ac fusius sibi inspiciendas putaverunt, idque vel praecipuum in Averroe laudatur, cuius solidissima doctrina de Graecorum fontibus non magis hausta quam expressa usque eo enituit ut solus 'commentatoris' nomen sibi iure vendicarit, ac iam constet inter omnes qui proximis saeculis sunt philosophati, eas philosophiae partes quae ab Aristotele sunt omissae, ab alio hactenus nemine vel diligentius inspectas vel fundamentis solidioribus fuisse constitutas.'

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was published 2 years later than volumes 2–11, and the fact that volume one has a title page of its own may suggest that the fascicle was originally a separate brochure which could be consulted in conjunction with any of the volumes. The inclusion of errata for all the volumes also clearly indicates that the prefatory fascicle postdates the rest of the series. We cannot be sure, however, that this fascicle was published separately. What we can do is to see what happens when this series of Aristotle-Averroes editions is reissued later in the sixteenth century.

The first of these is a reissue in 1560 in Venice by a different printer, Comin da Trino, who published several other Aristotelian texts in the mid-sixteenth century. As is made clear in the title some new texts have been added: 'Nonnulla super addita … Averrois media in libros metaphys. Commentatio, eiusdem de spermate libellus' ('Some works have been added … Averroes's Middle Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, and his little work *On the Sperm*'). But the title page also leaves something out: namely the name of Bagolino as editor, and all the prefaces except the life of Aristotle from Diogenes Laertius are omitted.

But if we turn to the next reprinting – by the Giunta brothers again, 2 years later, in 1562, we find a curious situation. In some copies (including the one reproduced in facsimile by Minerva Verlag) a truncated version of the prefatory fascicle has been included: all the prefaces, by Tomaso Giunta, Marco degli Oddi and Romolo Fabi have been omitted, and again, all mention of Bagolino has disappeared from the title page. In other copies (e.g. the one in the British Library: classmark 520.c.1-11) the whole of the prefatory fascicle is missing.

In Bagolino's place on the title page we have the mention of another scholar who does not feature at all in the 1552–1550 edition: namely Bernardino Tomitano. Unlike Bagolino, Tomitano is not named as the editor, but rather as an author, and is therefore parallel to Levi ben Gherson and Marcantonio Zimara (d. 1532) who are also named on the title page of the preface (indeed, the title *contradictionum solutiones* is the same as that of Zimara's work).[3] On the title page of the second part of the first volume Tomitano is described more fulsomely, as 'the outstanding logician and philosopher of our age.'[4]

Bernardino Tomitano was probably born in Padua in ca. 1517 and, having studied philosophy and become a doctor in Arts and in Medicine there, he became professor of logic at the university, being the teacher of Jacopo Zabarella (among others). He also practised medicine, and wrote two works on the Tuscan language (*Ragionamenti della lingua toscana* and *Quattro libri della lingua toscana*). He died in 1576. Charles Lohr lists 13 philosophical works, most of which are manuscripts of his lectures.[5] The title page of the 1562 Aristotle-Averroes edition refers to three works

[3] Aristotle, *Omnia quae extant opera* (1552 ed.): 'M. Antonii Zimarae in Aristotelis et Averrois dicta contradictionum solutiones'; Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1962), I, I: 'Bernardini Tomitani Patavini in Aristotelis et Averrois dicta, Animadversiones quaedam, et Contradictionum solutiones.'

[4] Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, I, II, title page of second part of first volume in Venice San Marco (= the first part of the third book in the British Library and Minerva reprint): 'Bernardini Tomitani Patavini logici atque philosophi nostrae aetatis eximii …'

[5] Charles Lohr, 'Renaissance Latin Aristotle Commentaries: Authors So-Z', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35 (1982), pp. 164–256 (201–204).

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which are printed as the third book of the first volume – the volume on logic. They cover 136 folios, with a preface by Iacobus Breznicius of Poland, and include a word by word commentary on the text of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, in which the Latin lemma is followed by the original Greek word or phrase, and often by the alternative Latin rendering of Argyropoulos; a long text in which problems in the *Posterior Analytics* and Averroes's Long Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* are resolved; and a commentary on the *Quaesita* of Averroes pertaining to the *Posterior Analytics*. Within the text of the *Posterior Analytics*, Averroes's Long Commentary, and his *Quaesita*, which is found in the second of the three books in the logic volume, summaries of, or cross-references to the second work and third work of Tomitano are interspersed. (Numbers are placed against passages which will be the subject of his *contradictionum solutiones*.)

We are dealing with a substantial amount of material here. When Tomitano's texts were introduced into the Aristotle-Averroes edition they necessitated a division of the single first volume (devoted to all the logical works except the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*) into three parts, as is stated rather quaintly by the note 'ad lectorem' in the 1562 edition:

> Dearest readers, we have divided this *Organon* of Aristotle (i.e., the first of these volumes) into three parts, not to cut up what it makes no sense to cut up, but lest it will be a burden to you because of its thickness and for the ease of you who want to handle it or take it to school.[6]

That a change in editorial policy in regard to the *Posterior Analytics* occurred with the 1562 Aristotle-Averroes edition is clear not only from the inclusion of Tomitano's notes and solutions, but also from the way Averroes's text itself is set out.

Marco degli Oddi, in the prefatory fascicle gives a detailed account of the method that he had followed:

> Then comes the *Posterior Analytics*, ordered according to the opinion of Averroes (although there is considerable debate about this order). When (Bagolino) began to purge this of various errors he was snatched away by premature death, to such an extant that I myself, following in his footsteps, had to compare (*accommodare*) <it> to a Greek copy, and had to bring to completion another much more difficult task, which he had left unfinished. For the Long Commentary on this book by Averroes had been translated (*conversa*) by Abram de Balmes, Burana of Verona and Jacob Mantino, but the translation of Abram was full of mistakes and obscure, that of Burana was lacking and *deprava* – which he himself testifies in his own manuscript, which we inherited after the death of Bagolino – and the translation of Mantino runs only from the first *textus* (*contextus*) to the 150th *textus* of the first book. Consequently Bagolino chose one version only – i.e. the one that was better than the others, putting it into shape by the collation and help of the others, but making no addition of his own. But he was forced to abandon this task when he had only just started. I, then, took up this charge, and, following the order of this man, whilst he was still alive, I brought it to completion. For I compared these three translations (*conversiones*) word for word, and in Bagolino's manner added to that of Burana, which Bagolino had made, as it were, the basis,

[6] Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, I, 1, sig…: 'Hoc Aristotelis Organum, humanissimi lectores, sive horum voluminum primum, in tres divisimus partes, non ut secaremus quod minime secari consentaneum est, sed in vestri gratiam id fecimus, ne vobis oneri esset ob eius crassitudinem sive attrectare, sive ad gymnasia vestra deferre volentibus.'

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what seemed necessary to add, and corrected what had to be corrected, indicating in the margin the differences of meaning and terminology (*sensus*, *vocabula*) that I found.[7]

When we turn to the 1562 edition we find a completely different editorial method has been followed. The three translations of De Balmes, Burana and Mantino have been placed side by side in three columns. That this was something of a novelty (compared with two parallel translations which we find elsewhere in the Aristotle-Averroes editions), is indicated by the marginal note on the second page: 'Nothing is missing here. We have left these spaces so that the translations match each other.'[8] But how do we explain this change of method?

Did the later editor think that the combination of three translations was a failure? It is more likely that the translations have been kept separate because they were being discussed separately at the time. In 1552 Giovanni Giacomo Pavese published the lectures he had given at Padua on Averroes's preface to his Long Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*.[9] He had divided this preface into *textus* (as Averroes had divided Aristotle's text) and for each *textus* he presented two translations – that of Abram de Balmes and that of Burana (apparently in the modified version in the 1552–1550 Aristotle-Averroes). De Balmes's translation had already been published in 1523. Evidently it was thought helpful to compare the readings of two translations, especially when the original Arabic (in the case of Averroes's preface) was not available. For the 1562 Aristotle-Averroes edition Mantino's translation was also brought into consideration. It was, as we know, available to the editors of the 1552–1550 printing of Aristotle-Averroes, and may well have remained in the Giunta printing house together with that of Burana until it was used in 1562.

If we compare the three-column version of the Long Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* in the 1562 Aristotle-Averroes edition with the single amalgamated version of the 1552–1550 printing we can see how Bagolino and Degli Oddi put their method into practice: Burana's readings have been retained more than those of either De Balmes or Mantino. However, many phrases from Burana's translation have been replaced by phrases from De Balmes. This has been made possible

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[7] Aristotle, *Omnia quae extant opera* (1552 ed.), I, fols 7ᵛ-8ʳ: 'Deinceps liber Posteriorum subit, ex Averrois sententia ita collocatus (quamvis de huius ordine non parva lis existat) quem cum expurgare a varijs erroribus coepisset, immatura morte subreptus fuit, adeo, ut ego coactus sim eius insequens vestigia ad graecum exemplar accommodare, atque unum aliud, quod longe difficilius reliquerat imperfectum, persolvere. Nam cum Averrois super hunc librum magna commentaria ab Abramo de Balmes, a Burana Veronensi, Iacoboque Mantino conversa essent, eumque Abrami translatio mendosa esset, atque obscura, manca vero ac depravata Buranae versio foret, quod et ipse in codice suo manuscripto, qui ad nos post obitum Bagolini pervenit, testatur, Mantini autem traductio solum a primo contextu ad centesimumquinquagesimum usque primi libri appareret, Bagolinus unam duntaxat alijs scilicet meliorem elegerat caeterarum collatione, atque ope conformatam, nulla facta additione ex seipso. quod quidem onus initio ferme cursus destituere coactus est. Ego itaque hanc rem aggressus sum, eamque ad finem usque viventis illius ordinem secutus perduxi: has enim tres conversiones ad verbum comparavi, et illam Buranae, quam, velut basim, Bagolinus fecerat, quae adijcienda videbantur, illius more adieci, corrigenda correxi, conversionum diversitates, sensuum, vocabulorumque repertas in margine signavi.'

[8] Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, I, II, fol. 1ᵛ: 'Hic nihil deest. Hec vero spatia relinquimus ut translatio translationi aeque respondeat.'

[9] Pavese, incidentally, dedicated his work to the same Bishop Bernardo Salviati as received the 1552–1550 Aristotle-Averroes.

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because these two translations are rather literal, and it is often a case of simply substituting one term for another. Mantino writes in a more expansive style and it is more difficult to identify the exact equivalent in his text. Usually the substitutions have been made tacitly, but occasionally variations between the translations are signalled by asterisks in the text and the words 'Jacob legit' or 'Abram legit' (usually in abbreviation) prefix the alternative translation in the margin. More frequently one finds merely 'a.l.' preceding the alternative reading ('alia lectio'). A rather long example of such a gloss is:

> Commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* in the 1552–1550 edition, fol. 127^{r}
>
> Text: Numerum et dispositiones * specierum ipsarum… secundum quod deducunt hominem ad verificationem perfectam et formationem perfectam
>
> Marginalia: *a.l. attributa et sic saepius legitur.
>
> Apud Ave. formatio et conceptio, incomplexorum motionem significant, verificatio autem, assertio, fides, certitudo, certificatio, complexorum, prout varie interpretes transferunt.

Compare the individual translations (1562 ed., fol. 2^{r}):

Abram de Balmes	Burana	Jacob Mantino
secundum numerum suarum specierum et attributorum	numerum ac dispositiones specierum ipsarum	pro consyderatione igitur harum propositionum
in quantum conducunt hominem ad perfectam assertionem perfectamque conceptionem	secundum quod inducunt hominem ad veritatem perfectam et formationem perfectam	quatenus ad complexorum perfectam cognitionem (quam certificationem seu fidem Arabes vocant) et ad simplicium ac incomplexorum integrum conceptum (quem formationem iidem appellant[10]) hominem ducunt.

On fol. 170^{r} of the 1552–1550 edition, written in capitals across the whole page (the edition is in two columns) we find the name Ioannes Baptista Bagolinus Veronensis emblazoned, followed by the words: 'This man most excellent in philosophy, medicine, and the other sciences, completed the volume up to this point, omitting the rest. What he was not able to complete, forestalled by death, Marco degli Oddi of Padua, the philosopher and doctor, and son of the most renowned Oddo, and a student of Bagolino, joined to him most closely, rendered complete in that order which he had been taught by Bagolino himself, whilst he lived.'[11]

Instead of referring to the editor, in the 1562 edition the death of Mantino is mentioned: 'Hucusque doctissimi Mantini, candide lector, aurea super hoc primo Poster. pervenit translatio: caetera vero, morte praeventus, perficere haud potuit'

[10] The two words are probably taÐdīq and taÐawwur respectively.

[11] Aristotle, *Omnia quae extant opera*, I, f. 170^{r}: 'Ioannes Baptista Bagolinus Veronensis Philosophiae, Medicinae, caeterarumque scientiarum vir eccellentissimus, volumen hoc, reliquis tam absolutis, hucusque perfecit: Residuum vero, quod ipse immatura morte praeventus explere non valuit, MARCUS Odus Patavus, Philosophus ac Medicus Clarissimi ODI filius, viri illius discipulus, maximaque familiaritate coniunctus, eo ordine, quo ab ipso, dum viveret, hoc in negotio fuerat edoctus, reddidit absolutum.'

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('Thus far, dear reader, the golden translation of the most learned Mantinus extended. Prevented by death, he was not able to complete the rest'; Fol. 319[r]).

For Aristotle's text (which is, of course, cut up into *textus* or *contextus* in Averroes's commentary), the 1552–1550 edition gives two translations, one, a revision of the medieval vulgate, the second Burana's own translation from the Hebrew. Occasionally, Degli Oddi also gives the original Greek reading in Greek letters in the margin,[12] showing that he had collated a Greek text, as he claimed in the prefatory fascicle, and there are isolated references to Argyropoulos's rendering of the Greek.[13]

The three column layout of the 1562 Aristotle-Averroes edition includes the lemmata of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* in the translations of all three scholars, Abram de Balmes, Burana and Mantino. But the addition of Tomitano's commentary on Aristotle's text gives the reader a much greater insight into the relationship of these translations to the original Greek. For, as I have already indicated, Tomitano, for each Latin lemma gives the original Greek and discusses the correspondence between the Latin and the Greek text. A good third of the Greek text can be reconstructed simply by stringing these lemmata together. So, in the 1562 Aristotle-Averroes edition we may see the erosion of the scholastic idea that Aristotle could be understood solely through Latin translations.[14] With Tomitano's commentary one might as well have a bilingual Greek and Latin text, which is a format that becomes increasingly common (from 1530 s onwards).[15]

But why was such a fuss made of the *Posterior Analytics*, and what was the attraction of Averroes's interpretation of it? It is well known that Padua was a lively centre of Aristotelianism from the late fifteenth century onwards. Particularly strong was a concern for logic and scientific method.[16] Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* provided the starting point for any discussion of scientific method and investigation.

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[12] E.g., on fol. 128r (beginning of text) and 156v. Note also fol. 132v: 'Aliqui codices antiqui addunt haec verba.'

[13] Ibid., fol. 17[r].

[14] On the gradual introduction of the Greek Aristotle and the Greek commentators, at first alongside Averroes's commentaries, and then as a substitute for them, see Edward P. Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science in Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo', in Id., *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance: Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), I, and Dag N. Hasse, 'Aufstieg und Niedergang des Averroismus in der Renaissance: Niccolò Tignosi, Agostino Nifo, Francesco Vimercato', in *"Herbst des Mittelalters"? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, eds Jan A. Aertsen and Martin Pickavé (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2004), pp. 447–473.

[15] Cf. F. Edward Cranz, 'Editions of the Latin Aristotle Accompanied by the Commentaries of Averroes' in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 116–128 (128): 'But for the first time in the editions whose history we have been following, the primary point of reference is the Greek original. In a curious way, such gifts from the Greeks threaten the very existence of the Latin Averroistic Aristotle. The Latin Aristotle, and even more the Latin Averroes, lose their status as separate and autonomous worlds of thought; they must more and more become ancillary to the *Graeca veritas* and to philology as queen of the sciences.'

[16] The classic text on this subject is John H. Randall, Jr., *The School of Padua and the Emergence of Modern Science* (Padua: Antenore, 1961), in which Tomitano's concern with method is mentioned on pp. 48–49.

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Gilrolamo Bagolino, the father of Giovanni Battista Bagolino, and a professor at Padua from 1517 to 1525, had written a commentary on the work. The *Posterior Analytics* was very important for Averroes too. It is the only logical text on which he wrote a Long Commentary as well as a Middle Commentary. The majority of questions in his 'Logical Questions' concern this text. Averroes's Middle Commentaries on the *Organon*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* had been translated into Latin in the thirteenth century by William of Luna in Italy and Hermann the German in Spain. The Long Commentary constituted a new discovery for Latin scholars (as I mentioned, it was first published in De Balmes's translation, in 1523) as was the Epitome of the whole *Organon*, and the logical *Quaesita*, both also translated by De Balmes (though Degli Oddi regarded the translations as poor). Bartholomäus Keckermann (1571–1609), the German logician and promotor of 'analytics' at the turn of the seventeenth century, probably reflects the opinion of the Paduan Aristotelians in stating that 'In the *Posterior Analytics* it appears Averroes has performed an excellent work and such as deserves to be immortal.'[17] Tomitano, also a professor at Padua, was interested as much in Averroes's Long Commentary as in the Greek text of the *Posterior Analytics.* It is significant that he singled out for comment the logical questions on the *Posterior Analytics,* leaving aside the other questions in Averroes's works. Pavese, as 'professor of *philosophia extraordinaria*' in Padua in 1552, devoted 67 folios of a quarto-sized book to explaining the meaning of Averroes's introduction to his Long Commentary. At the end of this book he summaries the main questions addressed, which include:

Why is the syllogism called the *form* of a demonstration?
Why are the premises called the *matter* of a demonstration?
Does one know in advance concerning a subject what it is and whether it is?
Can the principles of a subject be demonstrated?
Is the analysis (resolution) which speculative sciences use the same as that which the arts use?
Is the little book of Porphyry a necessary part of logic?
Are Rhetoric and Topics different faculties?

The debates among the professors in Padua had immediate effects on what was printed off shore by the publishers in Venice. For example, it was noticed that the order of the text of the *Posterior Analytics* in Averroes differed from that of the Greek-Latin tradition. Degli Oddi avowedly retains Averroes's order,[18] but Tomitano explicitly says that he has changed the order, both in his solutions of the contradictions in the Long Commentary and in his discussion of Averroes's questions on logic, so that it conforms to the 'old order.' The changes from edition to edition of the Aristotle-Averroes volumes reflect, as I hope to have shown, the developments in the academic circles in Padua and can hint at not only the academic discussions going on there, but also at the tensions, loyalties, and passions of the personalities involved.

[17] Bartholomäus Keckermann, *Systema systematum*, ed. Johann Heinrich Alsted (Hanau: Heirs of Wilhelm Antonius, 1613), p. 17b. Quoted in Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, eds Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), I, p. 385.

[18] Aristotle, *Omnia quae extant opera*, I, fol.7^{v}. For the Latin text, see supra, n. 8.

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Chapter 4
Humanism and the Assessment of Averroes in the Renaissance

Craig Martin

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Introduction

Disdain for Averroes, or for Averroism, as a symbol of the mistaken ways of university professors and other academics is as old as humanism if not older. Petrarch despised scholasticism for what he saw as its linguistic barbarism and irreligious slant. His rants against physicians who had replaced true Christianity with scholastic philosophy defined the apparent rift between the schools and humanists. Attacks similar in spirit to Petrarch's continued for centuries among Renaissance humanists. Charles B. Schmitt wrote that:

> One can search in vain through humanistic writings on Aristotle for mentions of Averroes in anything but pejorative terms… From the beginning the humanists were generally closed to Averroism and restrictive, while the scholastics were open and receptive to new currents.[1]

Even if Schmitt slightly overstated his case, he accurately described the general currents of Renaissance Aristotelianism. Nevertheless, Averroes's writings were immense in size and contain numerous positions. The multiplicity of his views might suggest that there were multiple Averroisms just as there were, as Schmitt argued, multiple Aristotelianisms.[2]

[1] Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 25.

[2] On the multiplicity of Aristotelianisms, see Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance*, pp. 10–34.

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The richness of Averroes's writings and the variety of his positions, even if we only take into account what was available in Latin during the Renaissance and Middle Ages, on occasion appealed to humanists and even more so to sixteenth-century university professors, who, while perhaps not being humanists *stricto sensu*, embraced some of the ideals of humanism, such as an interest in an historical understanding of ancient Greek sources and the desire to understand the literal meaning of Aristotle's writings, even if this true meaning did not correspond to philosophical truth. The connections between the reception of Averroes's works and humanism demonstrate overlapping interests and the breadth of Renaissance thought, rather than being a means to define more strictly either humanism or Aristotelianism.[3]

Coluccio Salutati's *De nobilitate legum et medicinae* (1399) gives a sense of how some of Averroes's positions might have appealed to humanists. In this work, he put forth the argument that medicine is inferior to the field of law, by relying on the claim that medicine is not a proper *scientia*. Rather than providing the causes of unchanging subjects, medicine is merely a practical art that deals with contingents. Salutati enlisted the authorities of Averroes and Galen to support this view, maintaining this argument against Avicenna who defined medicine as the '*scientia* by which we learn the various states of the human body, when in health and when not in health, whereby health is conserved and whereby it is restored, after being lost.'[4] According to Salutati, Averroes and Galen correctly held that the 'art of medicine is an operative art,' or in other terms a 'mechanical art.'[5] Galen's view on this matter is difficult to pin down. But Salutati saw that an accurate interpretation of his view on medicine is that the field 'regards practice not the [abstract] speculation' about causes that distinguished proper knowledge from *technē*. Unlike the ambiguous Galen, Averroes explicitly defined medicine as being concerned with the operative aspects of an art in I,1 of his *Colliget*.[6]

The adoption of the Averroistic position demanded that Salutati reject Avicenna's division of medicine into *theorica* and *practica*. For Salutati, all medicine is in fact based on empiricism. Even the appropriation of concepts from philosophy or natural philosophy, such as the four elements, which Hippocrates and Galen developed, was based on their experience. According to Salutati, medicine, necessarily, must be based on empiricism because of the nature of what it studies. It treats contingents about which there can be no certainty.[7] Moreover, bodily changes and illness are not

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[3] For an overview of the correspondences between Averroism and humanism see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Arabic Philosophy and Averroism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 113–133 (pp. 129–130).

[4] Avicenna, *Liber canonis* (Venice: Giunta, 1562), fol. 3^{r}; translation from Edward Grant, *A Sourcebook in Medieval Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 715.

[5] Coluccio Salutati, *De nobilitate legum et medicina*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, [1947]), pp. 22–24.

[6] Averroes, *Colliget libri vii* (Venice: Giunta, 1564), fol. 4^{r}; in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1962), Supplementum I, fol. 3^{r}E.

[7] Salutati, *De nobilitate legum et medicina*, p. 112.

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static and change according to location.[8] If there is no constancy to the diseases and cures that medicine studies, knowledge about these subjects can only be provisional and can only be developed through experience.

Salutati's use of Averroes is evidence of an interest in several trends that have often been considered central to humanism. His characterization of Averroes's view of medicine as mechanical undermines the authority of university physicians just as Petrarch had attempted to reduce their prominence.[9] Secondly, the main point of Salutati's discourse is to demonstrate that the field of law is nobler than medicine; thus, Averroes's writings became a tool in Salutati's larger goal of establishing the rule of law as a basis for government; they were tools for the advancement of 'civic humanism.' Finally, Salutati did not use Averroes's authority alone. Rather he linked it to Galen and Hippocrates, the ancient and therefore privileged sources of medicine. Averroes's positions retained authority because of their perceived correspondence to the ancients. Linking Averroes to ancient writers was common to many Renaissance thinkers who relied on his authority.

Averroes and Antiquity

In order to understand why Renaissance scholars were willing to associate Averroes with ancient thinkers it is necessary to examine Averroes's goals as well as his vision of antiquity, Aristotle, and Greek thought. Averroes's view of Aristotle was unequivocal. In his eyes, Aristotle was:

> A rule and exemplar which nature devised to show the final perfection of man … the teaching of Aristotle is the supreme truth, because his mind was the final expression of the human mind. Wherefore it has been well said that he was created and given to us by divine providence that we might know all that is to be known.[10]

As a result his commentaries attempted to systematise, paraphrase, and reorder Aristotle's writings in order to make his thought more easily understood.[11] While many medieval thinkers, both Muslim and Christian, might have thought that

[8] Ibid., p. 260.

[9] Andrea Carlino, 'Petrarch and the Early Modern Critics of Medicine', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 35 (2005), pp. 559–582.

[10] Averroes, com. 14, bk 3 (*De anima*), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, Supplementum II, fol. 159^{v} (trans. from David Knowles, *Evolution of Medieval Thought* [Baltimore: Helicon, 1962], p. 200); Id., *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 433. See also: Averroes, 'Prooemium in libros physicorum Aristotelis', in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, fol. 5^{r}.

[11] Josep Puig Montada, 'El Proyecto vital de Averroes: Explicar e interpretar a Aristóteles', *al-Qanṭara*, 32 (2002), pp. 11–52; Steven Harvey, 'Averroes' Use of Examples in his *Middle Commentary on the Prior Analytics,* and Some Remarks on his Role as Commentator', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 7 (1997), pp. 91–113.

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Aristotle agreed or would have agreed with their philosophical views, Averroes's view of Aristotle was not just an attempt to employ authority. Rather his view is reflective of his project as a whole: an attack on the philosophies of al-Ghazālī and Avicenna because they refrained from imitating Aristotle and mixed Aristotelian thought with the theology of *kalām* and the metaphysics of Plato. In the words of Tzvi Langerman, Averroes was a participant in 'a program … of the Andalusians to construct an alternative to the syntheses which were produced in the East[ern]' parts of the Islamic world.[12] Averroes wrote that Avicenna's philosophy occupied 'almost a midpoint between the Peripatetics and the *mutakallimūn*,' the theologically-minded dialecticians.[13] In his commentary on *De anima*, Averroes chastised his contemporaries who erred because they put 'down the books of Aristotle … believing that this book is impossible to understand.' He continued, 'Avicenna does not imitate Aristotle,' thereby revealing his belief that philosophy is partly the imitation or the recreation of Aristotle's positions and arguments.[14] Moreover, Averroes's condemnations of the fusion of Platonic and Aristotelian frameworks explain why he thought Plato's works were inferior to those of his former student. Plato's love of geometry and devotion to Socrates prevented him from examining nature. Similarly, Avicenna's errors were the result of his 'lack of investigations in natural things and his confidence in his own genius.'[15] That is not to say that Plato's works were of no use to Averroes, just of limited use. For example, he apparently justified writing his commentary on Plato's *Republic* by explaining that Aristotle's *Politics* were unavailable to the Arabic-reading world.[16]

Averroes's attempt to recover Aristotle did not go unaided. His aids were the Greek commentators on Aristotle, such as Themistius, Olympiodorus, and Alexander. Contemporary historians of philosophy, such as Robert Wisnovsky, have emphasised the continuity between the late antique Neoplatonizing commentators on Aristotle and Avicenna.[17] Averroes, however, assumed that these Greek works, which had been translated into Arabic and often transformed into handbooks, were valuable because of their chronological and linguistic proximity to Aristotle. For Averroes, they represented a purer form of Aristotelianism free from Platonism and *kalām*.[18] Averroes even modelled his works on the Greek commentators. The organization of

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[12] Y. Tzvi Langermann, 'Another Andalusian Revolt? Ibn Rushd's Critique of Al-Kindi's *Pharmacological Computus*', in *The Enterprise of Science: New Perspectives*, ed. Jan P. Hogendijk and Abdelhamid I. Sabra (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 351–372 (366).

[13] Averroes, com. 22, bk 2 (*Physica*), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, fol. 57^{r}.

[14] Averroes, com. 30, bk 3 (*De anima*), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, Supplementum II, fol. 171^{r}; Id., *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, p. 470.

[15] Averroes, com. 67, bk 3 (*De coelo*), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fol. 227^{r}.

[16] Averroes, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, trans. by Erwin I. J. Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 112.

[17] Robert Wisnovsky, 'Avicenna and the Avicennian Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 92–136 (pp. 96–105).

[18] For his attacks on *kalām*, see Averroes, com. 18, bk 12; com. 14, bk 2; com. 15, bk 2; com. 32, bk 7, (*Metaphysica*), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fols 305^{r}; 34^{v}; 35^{r}; 181^{v}; 34^{v}; 35^{r}; 181^{v}.

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his short commentaries is reminiscent of Themistius's works, for example. In the prooemium to his Long Commentary on *Physica*, Averroes explained the rationale of this project. He noted that because Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on *Physica* stopped at the eighth book, there was no complete account of this work.[19] Averroes thus aimed to finish Alexander's job.

Authors of Aristotelian commentaries in the decades around 1500 were continuing a tradition that dated back to the founding of universities or even before. They were also well aware of more recent intellectual movements. Humanist emphases on discovering ancient texts, reading Greek and using ancient sources led to an interest in the works of the Greek commentators. Some of these works, such as many of Alexander's treatises, had been translated in the thirteenth century.[20] Many, however, were unknown until Renaissance philologists translated the works of Themistius, Olympiodorus, Philoponus, Simplicius and others. For Renaissance scholars, these works were considered valuable because they were storehouses of arguments. Moreover, their authors were native speakers of Aristotle's mother tongue and so a guide to reading Aristotle in Greek, which sixteenth-century scholars such as Agostino Nifo and Jacopo Zabarella did. Others saw the Greek commentators as models. Jacques Lefèvre's paraphrases of Aristotle are directly related to his approving familiarity with Ermolao Barbaro's translations of Themistius as well as a means to transform Aristotelian discussions so they would not refer to what Lefèvre saw as the linguistic and conceptual barbarisms of the Middle Ages.[21]

The growing interest in ancient commentaries during the Renaissance is not surprising, considering the broad and intense desire to understand ancient texts, the deep interest in Greek writings and the trust in older philosophical sources. There was a simultaneous growth, or at least no dip, in interest in Averroes's writings. Charles Burnett and Harry Wolfson have shown how Averroes's writings were scrutinised, translated and retranslated in the years around 1500.[22] Additionally, scholars and university professors wrote far more commentaries on Averroes's works during these years than at any time earlier or later, both on works that were

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[19] Averroes, 'Prooemium in libros physicorum Aristotelis', in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, fol. 1r. For the fourteenth-century Hebrew translation and an English translation of this work see Steven Harvey, 'The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' Prooemium to his Long Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 52 (1985), pp. 55–84.

[20] F. Edward Cranz, 'Alexander Aphrodisensis', in *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum:Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller, 8 vols (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960), I, pp. 77–135.

[21] Eugene F. Rice, Jr., 'Humanist Aristotelianism in France: Jacques Lefèvre and his Circle', in *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance*, ed. Anthony H. T. Levi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), pp. 132–149. For Barbaro and his role in the growth of interest in the Greek commentators see: Jill Kraye, 'Philologists and Philosophers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 142–160 (pp. 144–147).

[22] Charles Burnett, 'The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science: 1492–1562', in *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Charles Burnett and Anna Contadini (London: The Warburg Institute, 1999), pp. 185–198; Harry A. Wolfson, 'The Twice-revealed Averroes', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), pp. 373–392.

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closely related to traditional curricula, such as *De substantia orbis* and *Colliget*, and on works that were more extraneous, such as *Destructio destructionum,* a defence of Aristotelian metaphysics from al-Ghazālī's attacks on Peripatetic causality.

The growing desire to write commentaries on Averroes was spurred by the realization that Averroes knew the Greek commentators well. For some, it seemed that Averroes's knowledge of Greek commentators was one of his prominent traits. Marcantonio Genua (1491–1563), a professor at Padua attempted to reconcile Averroes's psychology with Simplicius's.[23] Girolamo Balduini, a professor at Padua during the middle of the sixteenth century, who was knowledgeable enough about the Greek commentators to write on Porphyry's logic, noted in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physica* that 'when following Averroes we follow also the Greeks,'[24] who in turn conform to Aristotle. Konrad Gesner's brief biography of Averroes, after mentioning that he was a bitter rival of Avicenna, contended that 'in his commentaries on Aristotle he most greatly imitated the Greeks, such as Alexander and Themistius.' Averroes's adherence to Alexander was contrary to his departure from Greek medicine, in Gesner's eyes. Averroes was a stimulus to many later medical authors because of his frequent disagreements with Galen's positions.[25] The view that Averroes faithfully followed Alexander and other ancient commentators is even found in a preface to a 1495 printing of a Latin translation of Alexander's commentary on *De anima*.[26] The belief in the correspondence between Averroes and the Greek commentators led to increased scrutiny of Averroes during the Renaissance, which is seen in the increased number of writings specifically dedicated to interpreting Averroes's works.

Renaissance Commentaries on Averroes

The 1405 statues of the University of Bologna specify that lectures should be given on two of Averroes's writings in the faculty of arts: *De substantia orbis*, and the prologue, and parts of the first, second and fifth books of *Colliget*.[27] While not the

[23] Bruno Nardi, 'Il commento di Simplicio al *De anima* nelle controversie della fine del secolo XV e del secolo XVI', in *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), pp. 365–442 (pp. 383–394); Paul J. J. M. Bakker, 'Natural Philosophy, Metaphysics, or Something in Between? Agostino Nifo, Pietro Pomponazzi, and Marcantonio Genua on the Nature and Place of Science of the Soul' in *Mind, Cognition and Representation: The Tradition of Commentaries on Aristotle's De anima,* ed. Paul J. J. M. Bakker and Johannes M. M. H. Thijssen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 151–177 (pp. 169–175).

[24] Girolamo Balduini, *Expositio aurea in libros aliquot Physicorum Aristotelis, et Averrois super eiusdem commentationem; et in prologum Physicorum eiusdem Averrois* (Venice: [s.n.], 1573), p. 4.

[25] Konrad Gesner, *Bibliotheca universalis: sive Catalogus omnium scriptorum locupletissimus* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1545), fols. 100^{r}–102^{r}.

[26] F. Edward Cranz, 'The Prefaces to the Greek Editions and Latin Translations of Alexander of Aphrodisias, 1450–1575', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 102 (1958), pp. 510–556 (pp. 517–520).

[27] *Statuti delle università e dei collegi dello studio bolognese*, ed. Carlo Malagola (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1888), pp. 274–275.

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most famed or notorious portions of Averroes's writings, they clearly fit with the needs of the university curriculum; *De substantia orbis* bridges the works on terrestrial physics with astronomy, and *Colliget* added another voice to medical teachings, especially about the relation between composite and simple medicines. As so often happens, however, the demands of statutes, laws and rules do not conform to the extant evidence. There are indeed commentaries on these two works, but the number and wealth of commentaries on other books of Averroes suggests that these statutes were neither entirely normative nor descriptive of actual practices within and beyond this university.

It is difficult to find extant commentaries on *Colliget*, despite it being clear that the work was well-read and influential in numerous medical works. I have been able to find just two authors' works: Pietro Mainardi, a professor at Ferrara, who, in 1500, gave explanations for the fifth, sixth, and seventh books, where he extrapolated on the differences between food and medicine; and Matteo Corti, whose 1527 *Recollectae in septimum colliget Averrois* examined cures for fevers, among other issues, in a unique manuscript.[28] Corti's work appears to have been relatively a minor affair for this famed physician and professor, often linked to Renaissance Hellenism, who published numerous works on anatomy, dietetics, phlebotomy, and remedies.

There is a similar dearth of late medieval commentaries on *De substantia orbis*. While at least one of the late medieval scholars famous or notorious for his association with Averroes wrote commentaries on this work, it was not a standard work. John Jandun (d. 1328) directed himself to *De substantia orbis*; but other medieval scholars who were identified with Averroes during the sixteenth century looked beyond. Urbanus of Bologna, a relatively unknown fourteenth-century Servite wrote a commentary on Averroes's Long Commentary on *Physica*.[29] John Baconthorpe (1290–1328), who was routinely referred to as an 'Averroista' during the sixteenth century, put forth his views primarily in Sentence commentaries and quodlibetal disputes.[30] In any case, when Agostino Nifo (1469/70-1538) wrote his commentary on *De substantia orbis*, which was printed in 1508, he contended that he had found just one exposition on this work, that of John Jandun's, suggesting that the Bolognese statutes had had little influence.[31]

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[28] Pietro Mainardi, *Colliget Averois cum explanationes super V, VI, VII libri*, Ferrara, Biblioteca Ariostea, ms. II 84, fols 2^{v}–287^{v}; Matteo Corti, *Recollectae in septimum colliget Averrois*, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, ms. Lat. VII, 50 (=3570), fols 1^{r}–65^{r}.

[29] Horst Schmieja, 'Urbanus Averroista und die mittelalterlichen Handschriften des Physikkommentars von Averroes', *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*, 42 (2000), pp. 133–153; Charles J. Ermatinger, 'Urbanus Averroista and Some Early Fourteenth Century Philosophers', *Manuscripta*, 11 (1967), pp. 3–38.

[30] J. P. Etzwiler, 'John Baconthorpe, "Prince of the Averroists"', *Franciscan Studies*, 36 (1977 for 1976), pp. 148–176.

[31] Agostino Nifo, *Commentationes in librum de substantia orbis* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1508), fol. 2^{r}.

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A number of Nifo's contemporaries and successors took interest in *De substantia orbis*. Pietro Pomponazzi had written a question-commentary the year before Nifo's was printed; and throughout the sixteenth century a steady trickle of treatises analysed this work, which was part of the famed Giuntine editions. Giovanni Battista Confalonieri wrote a commentary printed in 1525, Giovanni Francesco Beati, who taught metaphysics at Padua, wrote a single *quaestio*, which was printed in 1542. Mainetto Mainetti, a professor at Pisa, wrote a commentary published in 1570; and the Ragusan Nicolò Vito di Gozze composed a commentary that was published in Bologna in 1580.[32] The publication of commentaries on *De substantia orbis* should not be taken as evidence that the Bolognese statutes were now influential, but rather as evidence that the composition of these works was the result of rising interest in Averroes. By this beginning of the sixteenth century, treatises, commentaries, and *quaestiones* that specifically addressed Averroes became more common, both in print and in manuscripts. The rise of these commentaries was seemingly paradoxically caused by humanism and Hellenism.

The idea that Averroes was following the Greeks and had preserved their texts was a rationale for writing commentaries on his works. Nifo in the first pages of his commentary on *De substantia orbis* wrote that 'when we Latins did not have the Greeks, we relied on this man [Averroes], because of the fragments of the Greeks, which he compiled.' Averroes's greatness thus depended on his reliance on Greek fragments. Expanding on his own goals, Nifo aligned himself with the Greek commentators, Alexander, Simplicius, and Themistius, all of whom he believed attempted to give literal expositions (*pro expositione litterae*) on Aristotle. Then, Nifo compared Averroes favourably with Themistius, 'whom Averroes followed *in toto*.' While Themistius unfolded Aristotle's words paraphrastically; Averroes did so 'by commenting and expanding.' Nifo thereby reasoned that commenting on a book written by a Muslim was warranted because of his literal expositions of Aristotle's words.[33]

Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), although less concerned with philology and Greek texts than Nifo, also puzzled over the nature of *De substantia orbis* and why it merited further comment. According to Averroes, Aristotle wrote a treatise on the substance of the orbs, which did not survive antiquity. Therefore, his treatise was an attempt to replace this missing title. Pomponazzi admired Averroes's purpose as well as his method. He believed that the Commentator collected 'all of the roots and foundations' for this book from statements sprinkled throughout the extant Aristotelian corpus; as a result, *De substantia orbis* is a necessary and worthy part

[32] Giovanni Battista Confalonieri, *Averrois libellus de substantia orbis nuper castigatus et duobus capitulis auctus diligentique studio expositus* (Venice: Benali, Bindoni & Pasini, 1525); Giovanni Francesco Beati, *Quaesitum in quo Averois ostendit quomodo verificatur corpora coelestia cum finita sint, et possibilia ex se acquirant aeternitatem ab alio* ([Padua; s.n.1542]); Mainetto Mainetti, *Commentarii in librum I. Aristotelis de coelo. Necnon librum Averrois de substantia orbis* (Bologna: Rossi, 1570); Nicolò Vito di Gozze, *In sermonem Averrois de substantia orbis, et in propositiones de causis* (Bologna: Giunta, 1580).

[33] Nifo, *In librum de substantia orbis*, fol. 2^{r}.

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of natural philosophy.[34] Pomponazzi's and Nifo's views were echoed in the works of later commentators on this work. Confalonieri wrote that 'our Averroes was so steady that whoever should use his guide … will perceive the strength of Aristotelian doctrine … just as he [Averroes] had drawn out the truth of Aristotle's mind, even while often having a corrupt text.' Confalonieri, thus, was content to put forth the 'true mind of Averroes's' and then solve any difficulties and problems that the text displayed.[35]

Interest in writing commentaries on Averroes's works was not confined to his treatises, but included his commentaries as well. Publishers made efforts to connect John Jandun's works to those of Averroes. An edition of Jandun's questions on *Parva naturalia* printed in 1589 added Marcantonio Zimara's question on motion and the mover, which was explained according to the 'intentions of Averroes and Aristotle.' Jandun's questions on *De caelo* were accompanied by *De substantia orbis* in 1552 and 1564 printings; and his questions on *Physica* were printed with annotations and further questions written by Elijah Delmedigo, well known for his Latin translations of Averroes from Hebrew.[36]

Nifo was perhaps the most prominent and frequent commentator on Averroes, using the *Destructio destructionum* to discuss metaphysics and Averroes's commentaries to discuss Aristotle. Nifo explained the aim of his super-commentaries using similar arguments to those employed to justify his commentary on *De substantia orbis*. He partially justified his commentary on Averroes's Long Commentary on *Physica* by noting its similarities to the works of Alexander and Themistius. Furthermore, he maintained that Averroes's adoption of short, middle and long commentaries came from the Greek commentators.[37] Nifo's commentaries seem to conform in style and purpose to the long commentaries and thereby imitate Averroes's imitation of the ancients. His commentary on Averroes's Long Commentary on the twelfth book of the *Metaphysica* repeated the idea that Averroes, while *barbarus*, was an admirable collector of relevant ancient passages, having scoured the works of Alexander, Themistius and others. Averroes, according to Nifo, had 'sufficiently

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[34] Pietro Pomponazzi, 'Super libello de substantia orbis expositio et questiones quattuor', in *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, ed. Antonino Poppi, 2 vols (Padua: Antenore, 1966), I, pp. 3–5. For Averroes's view that Aristotle wrote a book *De substantia orbis*, see p. 96.

[35] Confalonieri, *De substantia*, fols. 2^{r}; 64^{v}.

[36] John Jandun, *Quaestiones super Parvis naturalibus, cum Marci Antonii Zimarae de movente et moto, ad Aristotelis et Averrois intentionem, absolutissima quaestione* (Venice: Scoto, 1589); Id., *In libros Aristotelis de coelo et mundo quae extant quaestiones subtilissimae: quibus nuper consulto adiecimus Averrois sermonem De substantia orbis cum eiusdem Ioannis commentario ac quaestionibus* (Venice: Giunta, 1552); Id., *Subtilissime quaestiones in octo libros Aristotelis de physico auditu nunc recens post omnes omnium excusiones accuratissime recognite cum triplici tabula his annectuntur quaestiones Helie Hebrei Cretensis* (Venice: Giunta, 1544).

[37] Agostino Nifo, *Expositio super octo Aristotelis Stagiritae libros de physico auditu… Averrois etiam Cordubensis in eosdem libros prooemium, ac commentaria* (Venice: Giunta, 1552), sigs. ***ii^{v}–***iii^{r}.

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brought [these passages] if not to the words, at least to the ears of Aristotle.' As a result of Averroes's talent, Nifo claimed that he 'was so famous, that no one seemed to be Peripatetic unless he was an Averroist.'[38]

Nifo's identification of Peripatetic philosophy with Averroes's writings is a clue to better understanding what the purpose of a super-commentary was. In many ways a commentary on one of Averroes's long commentaries was no different than one specifically on Aristotle. Analysis of the Aristotelian text was followed by a discussion of authoritative views, one of which was that of Averroes. The fact that the treatise is a super-commentary in no way meant that Nifo agreed with all of Averroes's positions. While his 1505 treatise on the nature of mixtures is a defence of Averroes's positions, in the super-commentaries he frequently pointed out that certain views were erroneous or false. In fact, in the preface to his discussion of *Metaphysica*, he proclaimed that 'he followed the exposition of Alexander,' more than Averroes's.[39] Later in his career, when his skills in Greek language were evidently improved, Nifo changed his approach. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, a work for which only Averroes's short and middle commentaries are extant, Nifo's analysis of the text is as much an inquiry into the words and intent of Alexander as it is of Aristotle.[40] Nevertheless, there is a limit to the degree of difference between a commentary on Aristotle and one on a long commentary of Averroes. This was particularly true in Italy of the sixteenth century. Even before the Giuntine editions made access to Averroes nearly equivalent to access to the Latin *opera omnia* of the Stagirite, a multitude of university professors read their Aristotle accompanied and mediated by Averroes.

Nifo's super-commentaries that puzzle over the text of entire works were not the only type of Renaissance writing devoted to an analysis of Averroes. Smaller tracts, typically a single *quaestio*, also analysed the work of the Commentator. Nifo himself did so in his *De mixtione*. Others addressed a range of topics. Giovanni Francesco Beati, a professor of metaphysics at Padova from 1543 to 1546, used the seventh chapter of *De substantia orbis* to frame a *quaestio* on the eternity of the world. Vittore Trincavelli wrote a *quaestio* on reactions according to the doctrines of Aristotle and Averroes as an addendum to a 1520 edition of Swineshead's *Calculationes* that he had edited.[41] Others concentrated on Averroes's opening chapters as material for discussing the purpose of various philosophical subjects. Simone Porzio (1496–1554), in a brief treatise on Averroes's prooemium to the

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[38] Agostino Nifo, *In duodecimum Metaphysices Aristotelis [et] Auerrois volumen… Commentarij in lucem castigatissimi nuperrime prodeuntes* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1518), fols. 1^{v}–2^{r}.

[39] Agostino Nifo, *Averroys de mixtione defensio* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto 1505); Nifo, *In duodecimum metaphysices volumen*, fol. 1^{v}.

[40] Agostino Nifo, *In libris Aristotelis Meteorologicis commentaria* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1547). Averroes, *Meteorologica*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fols. 400^{r}–487^{v}.

[41] Nifo, *Averroys de mixtione defensio*; Vittore Trincavelli, *Quaestio de reactione iuxta Aristotelis sententiam et commentatoris* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1520).

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Long Commentary on *Physica* gave familiar rationales for reading the Commentator: Averroes 'wished to imitate the Greeks,' thus he put introductions before moving on to interpretations of particular sentences and words, just as in fact the later Alexandrian commentators did.[42] Similarly, one of Porzio's students, Girolamo Balduini, used a lengthy discussion of Averroes's prooemium to the Long Commentary on *Physica* as his own introduction to a commentary on that work, where he linked Averroes's positions to both the Greek commentators and Aristotle.[43] Giovanni Bernardino Longo, in his 1551 exposition on the prologue to *Analytica posteriora*, recycled the commonplace 'nemo Aristotelicus nisi Averroista,' attributing inspiration to Averroes's comments on *De caelo* where he wrote 'nemo peripateticus nisi alesandreus.'[44] Interest in Averroes's logical positions was not unique to Longo, Annibale Balsamo, for example, wrote a brief treatise in which he attempted to solve obscure points in *Analytica posteriora* 'ad mentem Averrois.' Thus, understanding what Averroes truly believed became a goal of sixteenth-century scholars.[45]

Critiques and Clarifications of Averroes as Guide to Antiquity

While for Nifo and others, Averroes's concordance and reliance on the Greek commentators recommended at least some of his works, some emphasised the negative aspects of their agreement. In a 1485 letter describing his reliance on a variety of Greek, Latin and Arab commentators for his Aristotelian paraphrases, Ermolao Barbaro (1453–1493) asserted with shock that Averroes's inferiority stems from the fact that all of his words were stolen from Alexander, Themistius and Simplicius.[46] Barbaro had by this time apparently softened his view. In 1483, in a letter to Nicoletto Vernia, a professor of philosophy at Padua from 1465 to 1499, Barbaro worked to persuade Vernia to 'condemn, hate and avoid this most wicked genre of philosophizing.'[47] Some 20 years later, Symphorien Champier (1472–1539) used Averroes's similarities to the Greek commentators as a means to denigrate him for lack of originality. 'Averroes took pleasure in following them… and did not so much draw from them but expressed them. Which is only what he was: the name commentator suited him.'[48]

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[42] Simone Porzio, *Prologus Averrois super primum phisicorum Aristotelis*, Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ms. A 153 inf., fol. 2r.

[43] Balduini, *In libros Physicorum*, pp. 1–4.

[44] Giovanni Bernardino Longo, *Dilucida expositio in prologum Averrois in Posteriora Aristotelis* (Naples: Cancer, 1551), sig. A1r.

[45] Annibale Balsamo, *Dubia aliquot in Posteriora circa mentem Averrois*, Milan, BA, ms. D 129 inf., fols 7r–16r.

[46] Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae, orationes et carmina*, ed. Vittore Branca, 2 vols (Florence: Bibliopolis, 1943), I, p. 92.

[47] Barbaro, *Epistolae,* I, p. 45.

[48] Symphorien Champier, *Cribratio, lima et annotamenta in Galeni, Avicennae et Consiliatoris opera*, ([Paris]: Officina Ascensiana), fol. 3r.

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The Bolognese professor Ludovico Boccadiferro (1482–1545) used Averroes's supposed lack of originality as a way to categorise the good and bad doctrines found in his work. 'Whatever is good that he has, Averroes took from the Greeks; nothing that he got from himself is good and everything he said on his own or took from his fellow Arabs, and, I mean everything, is fatuous and confused.'[49] Boccadiferro, thus, justified his reliance on Averroes, while still being capable of distancing himself from any controversial, erroneous or condemned doctrines. When he agreed with Averroes, he was innocently agreeing with the ancients.

Not all scholars, however, saw such a tight connection between Averroes and the Greek commentators. Girolamo Borro (1512–1592), a contentious and at times controversial professor at the University of Pisa during the years 1553–1559 and 1575–1586, rejected the idea that the Greek commentators were the greatest tool to understanding Aristotle. Borro attacked some aspects of humanism. He derided those who concentrated on texts, claiming that emending errors in manuscripts was both simple and of little value. Averroes was, for Borro, a tool in fighting those who tried to combine Platonism and Aristotelianism; Averroes's attacks on Avicenna and Avempace became a model for Borro's own disputes with Francesco de' Vieri (II) (1524–1591), his colleague at Pisa. In his short treatise *Multae sunt nostrarum ignorationum causae*, Borro named the mixing of doctrines as one of the causes, using Avicenna and the Greek commentators as his prime examples. He wrote:

> All of the Greek expositors stick in this same mud of those, who mixed Aristotle's doctrine with Plato, and who wanted them to be in agreement, but who while they lived wanted there to be disputes [among each other]… Out of these works no doctrine is born but some mixture of doctrines, which is neither Academic nor Peripatetic.[50]

This passage suggests that Borro had a dim view of the Greek commentators, but higher esteem for the unadulterated positions of Aristotle and Plato. Nevertheless, Borro, citing Averroes's criticism of Avicenna's lack of interest in the natural world, extended the critique to Plato himself, thereby denying the applicability of mathematics to discussions of nature while promoting an experiential approach, at least in theory.

The prologue of Borro's *De motu gravium, et levium* includes wildly lavish praise for Averroes, 'who when he digresses, brings Aristotle with him.' His method and writing style is of extreme merit according to Borro: 'nothing is richer, graver, more vigorous, more distinguished, and more splendid,' than Averroes's expositions.[51] Thus a number of the sections of this book are explanations of how Averroes had diligently elucidated the true and germane opinion of Aristotle while fighting

[49] Ludovico Boccadiferro, *Explanatio libri I physicorum Aristotelis* (Venice: Academia Veneta, 1558), fol. 53^{v}.

[50] Charles B. Schmitt, 'Girolamo Borro's *Multae sunt nostrarum ignorationum causae* (Ms. Vat. Ross. 1009)', in *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science* (London: Variorum, 1981), article XI, p. 475.

[51] Girolamo Borro, *De motu gravium, et levium* (Florence: Marescotti, 1575), p. 5.

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against the Platonizing views of Themistius and Avempace. Borro's appropriation of Averroes, and his opposition to those who combined Plato and Aristotle, gave him authoritative support for his polemics against mathematical approaches to explaining heaviness and lightness. Borro accepted the ideal of literal exposition and keeping doctrines pure, even as he rejected humanists' concerns with language and texts.

Borro's hostility toward philology stands apart from other sixteenth-century readers of Averroes. The goal of uncovering Averroes's intent must be understood in the context of Renaissance translation movements. Averroes's positions were not taken to be necessarily the truth, just as Aristotelians disagreed with the 'true opinion of Aristotle' at times. Rather trying to understand what Averroes really thought accompanied the process of making new translations. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Jacobo Mantini, Elijah Delmedigo, Abraham de Balmes and Calonymos ben David all made Latin translations of Averroes, based on Hebrew manuscripts, with new standards of Latin prose.[52] Establishing a text often requires determining the author's intent. Francesco Storella, a professor at Naples from 1561 to 1575, wrote two brief treatises dedicated to analysing the new translations of Averroes's logical and natural philosophical works. Storella's observations and annotations are filled with small detailed examinations of manuscripts, alternative translations and comparisons of the *antiqua traslatio* with the new translation of Mantini. He used observations of Ambrogio Leone (1459–1525), Gersonides (1288–1344) and Tiberio Baccilieri (1461–1511) as evidence for proposed emendations and as the basis for dispute.[53] Thus Storella integrated the Latin and Hebrew Averroistic commentary traditions; the latter dated to the early fourteenth century, when Gersonides wrote super-commentaries on Averroes.[54] The sum result of this integration was that Averroes became the subject of philological commentary concerned with translation and linguistics, rather than doctrinal issues per se. His commentaries reveal a transformed Averroes, an author whose works were the subject of linguistic analysis not just as a source for philosophical arguments and fragments of the Greeks' doctrine.

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[52] Charles Burnett, 'Arabic into Latin: The Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 370–404 (pp. 397–400).

[53] Francesco Storella, *Animadversionum in Averroem, pars prima logicales locos comprehendens*, Milan, BA, ms. I 166 inf., fols 123^{r}–156^{r}; Francesco Storella, *Observationum in Averroem liber secundus locos ad naturalem, medicinam, atque super naturalem philosophiam attinensque amplectens*, Milan, BA, ms. 166 inf., fols 158^{r}–214^{v}.

[54] Ruth Glasner, 'Levi ben Gershom and the Study of Ibn Rushd in the Fourtheenth Century', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 86 (1995), pp. 51–90; Steven Harvey, 'Arabic into Hebrew: The Hebrew Translation Movement and the Influence of Averroes upon Medieval Jewish Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, eds Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 258–280.

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Conclusion

The view that Averroes followed the letter of Aristotle's intent and avoided mixing it with Platonism was widespread among both supporters and opponents of Aristotelianism. Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597), who was a harsh critic of Aristotelianism and leaned strongly in the direction of Platonism, contended that Averroes had gained currency in the sixteenth century because he was *Aristotelicissimus* as opposed to Avicenna who had synthesised Plato with Aristotle. Averroes had 'judged all of Aristotle's words to be divine oracles.'[55] Patrizi's judgment of his contemporaries was accurate. As natural philosophy became increasingly eclectic and syncretic during the sixteenth century, objectors to that trend could turn to Averroes to find an historical example of a proponent of literalism struggling against the tendency to make philosophical syntheses. For example, Jacopo Zabarella (1532–1589), a leading professor of philosophy at Padua, thought that, despite being an 'Arab' and being unable to read accurate texts of Aristotle, Averroes had in fact understood Aristotle as well as anyone and explained Aristotle's intent beautifully.[56]

Zabarella's emphasis on Averroes's ability to transcend the philological limitations of his circumstances was reflected in the works of a number of late sixteenth-century scholars, who appreciated the humanist ideal of faithfully interpreting the intent of ancient authors, but who thought that excessive attention to philological detail did not improve philosophy. Perhaps, the most extreme formulation of the dictum, 'Grammar should be left to the grammarians,' and should not pertain to philosophy is found in the works of Giordano Bruno (1548–1600). Bruno, who linked Averroes's position on the indeterminacy of matter to Plotinus's world soul, thought that Averroes's lack of knowledge of the Greek language was advantageous. According to Bruno, Averroes was able to penetrate further into metaphysics because he did not read Greek and therefore was able to find the true Peripatetic foundation, while others just looked at grammar and were mere pedants.[57] Thus while the positive assessments of Averroes found in Bruno and Zabarella were not based on the humanist ideal of careful philological analysis, they embraced the desire to find a more accurate understanding of Aristotle's intent.

Although there were far fewer commentaries on Averroes than on Avicenna, Galen and others, the emergence of these commentaries during the first decades of

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[55] Francesco Patrizi, *Discussiones peripateticae* (Basel: Perna, 1581; repr. Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), p. 66; p. 162.

[56] Jacopo Zabarella, *De propositionis necessariis*, II, 2, in *Opera logica*, (Cologne: Zetzner, 1597; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), p. 380.

[57] Loris Sturlese, '"Averroè quantumque arabo et ignorante di lingua greca . . ." Note sull'averroismo di Giordano Bruno', in *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. Loris Sturlese and Friedrich Niewöhner (Zürich: Spur Verlag, 1994), pp. 319–348; Eugenio Canone, 'Giordano Bruno lettore di Averroè', in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Heritage*, ed. Carmela Baffioni (Naples: Guida, 2004), pp. 211–247.

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the sixteenth century helps explain why scholars read Averroes in these years and how their readings fit with larger intellectual movements. While some scholars were attracted by particular philosophical arguments, the broader value found in Averroes stemmed from his perceived proximity to antiquity, Aristotle and the late antique commentators.[58] That he was ignorant of Greek and a Muslim was pushed aside, while his access to ancient works unavailable to Renaissance authors recommended his works. As philology and humanism became applied not just to ancient authors but to medieval ones as well, Averroes became a subject for historical and philological inquiry. Determining his true intent became a quest in and of itself, separated at times from philosophy and at times from philology.

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[58] For the attraction of specific philosophical arguments see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Aufstieg und Niedergang des Averroismus in der Renaissance: Niccolò Tignosi, Agostino Nifo, Francesco Vimercato', in *Herbst des Mittelalters?: Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts,* ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Martin Pickavé (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 447–473; Id., 'The Attraction of Averroism in the Renaissance: Vernia, Achillini, Prassicio', in *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, ed. Peter Adamson, Han Baltussen and M. W. F. Stone, 2 vols (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2004), II, pp. 131–147.

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Chapter 5
Marsilio Ficino on Saturn, the Plotinian Mind, and the Monster of Averroes

Michael J.B. Allen

English speakers have always associated saturnian melancholy with that incomparable compilation by the hypochondriacal Robert Burton in the seventeenth century, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,[1] though the problem of the black humour goes back to antiquity and to the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*.[2] Academic study of melancholy's complex history in the Renaissance, however, is the work of a number of distinguished twentieth-century scholars, beginning effectively with Fritz Saxl and Erwin Panofsky's penetrating investigation of Dürer's great woodcut, *Melencolia*

I am especially indebted in this essay to conversations with Brian Copenhaver, Stephen Clucas, Peter Forshaw, Guido Giglioni, Dilwyn Knox, Jill Kraye, and Valery Rees. This article was first published in *Bruniana et Campanelliana*, 16 (2010), pp. 11–29. I would like to thank the publisher for allowing the article to be included in the present volume.

[1] Now edited and annotated by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair, with introduction and commentary by J. B. Bamborough and Martin Dodsworth, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989–2000). See Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and James Hankins, 'Monstrous Melancholy: Ficino and the Physiological Causes of Atheism', in Laus Platonici Philosophi: *Marsilio Ficino and His Influence*, eds Stephen Clucas, Peter J. Forshaw and Valery Rees (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 25–43 (published in Italian as '*Malinconia mostruosa:* Ficino e le cause fisiologiche dell'ateismo', *Rinascimento*, 47 (2007), pp. 3–23), which deals inter alia with some of Burton's Ficinian sources.

[2] *Problemata*, XXX.1.953a10-955a39. See Hellmut Flashar, *Melancholie und Melancholiker in den medizinischen Theorien der Antike* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966); Jackie Pigeaud, *La maladie de l'âme: Étude sur la relation de l'âme et du corps dans la tradition médico-philosophique antique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981); and John Monfasani, 'George of Trebizond's Critique of Theodore of Gaza's Translation of the Aristotelian *Problemata*', in *Aristotle's* Problemata *in Different Times and Tongues*, eds Pieter De Leemans and Michèle Goyons (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), pp. 273–292.

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1 (1514), and of Dürer generally.[3] This was followed by the pioneering studies of Don Quixote by Harald Weinrich[4] and Otis Green,[5] and of Elizabethan drama by Lawrence Babb in *The Elizabethan Malady.*[6] Then in 1963 appeared Rudolf and Margot Wittkower's remarkable *Born under Saturn*[7]; and barely a year later appeared what would turn out to be the commanding work in the field, Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl's *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*,[8] which linked *melancholia generosa* (with its roots in the medieval vice of *acedia*) to the emergence of our modern notion of genius. These foundational books were followed by Bridget Gellert Lyons's arresting *Voices of Melancholy: Studies in Literary Treatments of Melancholy in Renaissance England*,[9] Winfried Schleiner's wide-ranging *Melancholy, Genius and Utopia in the Renaissance*,[10] and indeed a number of other studies by historians of art, literature, music, medicine, the melancholic Dane,[11] mad Timon,[12] and Don Quixote, which have enhanced our understanding of the history and iconography of this complex cultural and medico-psychological phenomenon.

There is a Ficinian chapter to this history, however, that still remains to be written, and this despite the central role Ficino already plays in Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl's study as the theorist who linked melancholy and frenzy and confronted the pathos they constituted[13]; and despite too the signal role he also plays in the work of two other eminent art historians, André Chastel[14] and Edgar Wind.[15] In this chapter

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[3] Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, '*Dürers 'Melencolia 1': Eine quellen – und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1923). This was followed by Erwin Panofsky's magisterial *Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943) – subsequent editions in 1955 and 1971 were entitled *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer.*

[4] Harald Weinrich, *Das Ingenium Don Quijotes* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1956).

[5] Otis Green, 'El Ingenioso Hidalgo', *Hispanic Review*, 25 (1957), pp. 175–193.

[6] Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1951).

[7] Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963).

[8] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964). On pp. 18–41 the authors provide the Greek text, a translation and a commentary on Aristotle's *Problemata* XXX.1.

[9] Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy: Studies in Literary Treatments of Melancholy in Renaissance England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

[10] Winfried Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius and Utopia in the Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991).

[11] See esp. Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, chapter 4.

[12] Rolf Soellner, *Timon of Athens: Shakespeare's Pessimistic Tragedy* (Columbia, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1979).

[13] Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl argue that Ficino was the figure 'who really gave shape to the idea of the melancholy man of genius' (p. 255).

[14] André Chastel, 'Le mythe de Saturne dans la Renaissance italienne', *Phoebus*, 1/3-4 (1946), pp. 125–144; Id., *Marsile Ficin et l'art* (Geneva: Droz; Lille: Giard, 1954); Id., *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: Études sur la Renaissance et l'humanisme platonicien* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959).

[15] Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958; revised edition, New York: Norton, 1968).

Editor's Proof

I shall attempt in part to contribute to the history of the Renaissance Saturn, a history for which a lively collection of essays edited by Massimo Ciavolella and Amilcare A. Iannucci, *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*,[16] has established some of the main parameters.

Astrologically speaking, Saturn, as furthest, slowest, and by implication the most aged, driest, and coldest of the seven planets, has traditionally been linked with the seventh and last decade of the biblical span of human life, and thus on the one hand with slippered pantaloons, sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything, and on the other with otherworldly contemplation. More actively, as the 'highest' of the planets, it has also been seen as causing 'mutations in human life every 7th year,' unlike the Moon, say, which causes mutations every 7th day.[17] But in addition to his astrological, pharmacological and medical roles – the three are of course intermingled – Saturn as a deity has a special status in the Platonic tradition; and chiefly on the following four counts.

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First, he figures prominently in the Platonic vision of the zodiac – in this regard most familiar to Ficino via Macrobius's commentary on the dream of Scipio. Macrobius envisages human souls descending to earth from the fixed stars at birth by way of Cancer, the domicile of the Moon, and then at bodily death re-ascending by way of Capricorn, the 'night abode' of Saturn (Aquarius being his 'day abode'). In his 1482 *Platonic Theology* Ficino argues at XVIII.1.12 that the Egyptians had supposed that the light of the world's first day dawned when Aries was in mid-heaven and Cancer was rising. At that primal hour the Moon was in Cancer, the Sun in Leo, Mercury in Virgo, Venus in Libra, Mars in Scorpio, Jupiter in Sagittarius, and Saturn in Capricorn. Furthermore, the Egyptians had supposed that the individual planets were lords of these signs because they were situated in them when the world was born.[18] The Chaldeans, on the other hand, had believed that the world's nativity occurred when the Sun was in Aries not in Leo. The Chaldeans and the Egyptians had both assumed, Ficino maintains, that the world was created at some point in time; and both had called Aries, either because the Sun was in it or because it was itself coursing through mid-heaven (*quod ipse medium percurreret caelum*), the head of the zodiacal signs. Hence astronomers had come to judge the fortune of the whole year principally from the entrance of the Sun into Aries, as if everything virtually depended on it. Moreover, the Egyptians had assigned Leo alone to the Sun and Cancer alone to the Moon,[19] while assigning to the other planets, in addition to the signs in which they were then dwelling, the five extra

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[16] *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds Massimo Ciavolella and Amilcare A. Iannucci (Ottowa: Dovehouse Editions, 1992).

[17] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XVII.2.12, eds and trans. Michael J. B. Allen and James Hankins, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001–2006), VI, p. 23.

[18] Macrobius, *In somnium Scipionis commentarios*, I.21.23-25, ed. James Willis, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970), II, pp. 88–89.

[19] Ibid., I.21.25.

Editor's Proof

signs in reverse planetary order. Hence they had allotted the sign of Aquarius (which immediately succeeds Capricorn) to Saturn as the last and furthest of the planets, but Pisces to Jupiter, Aries to Mars, Taurus to Venus, and Gemini to Mercury.[20] In short, they had bestowed on five of the planets two zodiacal signs each, while giving the Sun and Moon just one each.

In the *Platonic Theology* XVIII.5.2 Ficino observes that since souls descend principally (though not apparently exclusively) from Cancer according to the Platonists, and ascend in turn through Capricorn, the sign opposite to Cancer, Cancer had been denominated by the ancients (meaning the ancient theologians) 'the gateway of men', and Capricorn, 'the gateway of the gods'.[21] Yet nobody should be deceived, Ficino warns us, to the point of accepting the descent and ascent in this Platonic tradition as referring to an actual place or celestial region. Because the Moon, the mistress of Cancer, is closest to generation, but Saturn, the lord of Capricorn, the furthest away, the souls are thought to descend 'through the instinct that is lunar and vegetative,' but to ascend through 'the instinct that is saturnian and intellectual.' For the ancients call Saturn 'the mind by which alone we seek higher things.' The 'dry power' that is common to both Capricorn and Saturn, 'since it internally contracts and collects the spirits,' will incite us ceaselessly to contemplation if we succumb to its dominance, whereas the wetness of the Moon will, to the contrary, disperse and dilate our spirits and drag our rational soul down towards sensibles. However, in the soul's descent from Cancer it has received from the divinity of Saturn directly, and from Saturn's light as well, certain 'aids or incitements' to the more concentrated or focused pursuit of contemplation. And the soul has received them by way of its *idolum*, which is the 'foot' of the soul or rather reason's image, containing the phantasy, sense, and vital force and serving as 'the ruling power of the body' in that it inheres in the ethereal body or vehicle as its life.[22] Likewise, the soul receives a stimulus to the governing of civic affairs from Jupiter's divinity and light; while from Mars's it is roused to the magnanimity that battles against injustices, from the Sun's, to the clarity of the phantasy and the senses, from Venus's, to charity (i.e. to the gifts of the Graces),[23] from Mercury's, to interpretation and eloquence, and from the Moon's, to generation.[24] Nonetheless, though the individual planetary gifts are bestowed in this beneficent way, they may degenerate in the earthly mixture and become evil for us.

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[20] Ibid., I.21.26.

[21] Ibid., I.12.1-2, II, p. 48.

[22] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XIII.2.15-20. See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), pp. 371–375; also, interestingly, Stéphane Toussaint, *'Sensus naturae, Jean Pic, le véhicule de l'âme et l'équivoque de la magie naturelle'*, in *La Magia nell'Europa moderna: Tra antica sapienza e filosofia naturale*, eds Fabrizio Meroi and Elisabetta Scapparone, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 2007 [2008]), I, pp. 107–145; and Brian Ogren, '*Circularity, the Soul-Vehicle and the Renaissance Rebirth of Reincarnation: Marsilio Ficino and Isaac Abarbanel on the Possibility of Transmigration', Accademia*, 6 (2004), pp. 63–94 (64–79).

[23] With a play on *Charites* – the three Graces, Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia.

[24] Macrobius, *In somnium Scipionis*, I.12.14-15, II, p. 50.

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Given Ficino's own horoscope – he was born on 19 October 1433, with Aquarius on the Ascendant and Saturn and Mars in Aquarius[25] – this all points, as Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl's book so richly demonstrates, to the special impact of 'the seal of melancholia' in the life of the philosopher. He regarded it as a 'divine gift', as he says at the conclusion of a letter to his beloved Giovanni Cavalcanti,[26] recalling the famous passage in the [Pseudo-] Aristotelian *Problemata* XXX.1. However, a close look at Ficino's *Platonic Theology* XIII.2 is in order here, since it casts considerable light on the unique role for him of Saturn. He argues, following medieval astrological lore,[27] that since the melancholic humour is associated with earth which is not 'widely diffused' like the other three elements 'but contracted tightly into itself,' it both 'invites and helps the soul to gather itself into itself.' The earthy melancholic humour has in other words a contractive or concentrating power. He continues obscurely: 'If the soul frequently gathers the very spirits into itself, then because of the continual agitation in the liberated and subtle parts of the [other] humours,' it takes the body's complexion, compounded as it is from the four humours in various proportions, and 'renders it much more earthy than when it had first received it.' This is especially because, by gathering itself in or concentrating itself, the soul 'makes the body's habitual condition more compressed.'[28] Ficino then identifies such a compression with the nature both of Mercury and of Saturn. For these two planets especially use their nature to 'gather our spirits round a centre,' and thus in a way to summon 'the mind's attention from alien matters back to its own concerns, and to bring it to rest in contemplation, and to enable it to penetrate to the centres of things.'[29] For the soul to accomplish this contemplative goal, the planets do not act as efficient causes but simply provide the occasion: they are hosts, but the soul is a guest who can come and go as she pleases. We have crossed over here from psychological or humoural concentration to mental concentration. And the underlying imagery involves not so much compression per se as contraction to a point, the geometrical point being closest, indeed immediately proximate, to the intelligible world of non-extension, since it is at the summit of the scale that descends through the line and the plane down to the three-dimensionality of the sensible world.[30]

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[25] See his letters to Giovanni Cavalcanti in the third book of *Letters*, and to Martin Prenninger in the ninth; also his *De vita*, III.2 in *Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1576; repr. Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1962), pp. 533, 732.3-733, 901.2 respectively.

[26] See n. 25 above.

[27] See *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 252, for instance, on Jacopo della Lana.

[28] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XIII.2.2.

[29] Ibid., XIII.2.3.

[30] On the Pythagorean notion of the progression of the point to line to plane to solid, see Aristotle, *Topics*, VI.4.141b5-22; *De caelo*, I.1.268a7-a28; *De anima*, I.2.404b16-b24; *Metaphysics*, I.9.992a10-b18, III.5.1001b26-1002b11, XIII.9.1085a7-b3. In general see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 1977), pp. 5–6, 27–28; and, for Ficino, see my *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 105 and n. 34; and *Nuptial Arithmetic: Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on the Fatal Number in Book VIII of Plato's* Republic (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), p. 93 and n. 39.

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Second, Saturn figures prominently in the famous mythical passage in the *Statesman* 269C-274D, which Ficino takes up on a number of occasions. Let us consider the convolutions of the argument in the *Platonic Theology*, XVIII.8.7:

> Here is unfolded that old mystery most celebrated by Plato in the *Statesman*: that the present circuit of the world from East to West is the fatal jovian circuit, but that at some time in the future there will be another circuit opposed to this under Saturn that will go from the West back again to the East. In it men will be born of their own accord and proceed from old age to youth, and in an eternal spring abundant foods will answer their prayer unasked. He calls Jupiter, I think, the World-Soul by whose fatal law the manifest order here of the manifest world is disposed. Moreover, he wants the life of souls in elemental bodies to be the jovian life, one devoted to the senses and to action, but Saturn to be the supreme intellect among the angels, by whose rays, over and beyond the angels, souls are set alight and on fire and are lifted continually as far as possible to the intellectual life. As often as souls are turned back towards this life, and to the extent they live by understanding, they are said correspondingly to live under the rule of Saturn. Consequently, they are said to be regenerated in this life of their own accord, because they are reformed for the better by their own choice. And they are daily renewed, daily, that is, if days can be numbered there, they blossom more and more. Hence that saying of the apostle Paul: 'The inner man is renewed day by day.'[31] Finally foods arise spontaneously and in good measure, and in a perpetual spring are supplied them in abundance. This is because the souls enjoy the wonderful spectacles of the truth itself, not through the senses and through laborious training, but through an inner light and with life's highest tranquillity and pleasure. The fragrance of such a life is perceived by the mind that has been separated as far as it can be separated; but its taste is tasted by a mind that has been absolutely separated.

In this suggestive passage Saturn is invoked as the ruler and guardian, not only of the golden age when mankind was in harmony with a beneficent and plenteous nature, but of an age to come when we will become young again even as we become wise and enjoy what the *Phaedrus* 247a, 4–5 calls 'the spectacles' of truth.[32] Wisdom is now being conferred on youth not on old age, given that saturnian philosophy is being linked, however paradoxically, with the powers, not of the Titans, but of the youngest gods, those of the third Olympian generation. This gives us a special perspective on Socratic and Platonic philosophy's love affair with adolescents and their education, their *paideia*; and with the more mysterious but no less central idea of a returning time, of a reversal in the jovian ordering of things. There are further complications that need not concern us here but include the Ficinian notions that the saturnian return itself is governed mysteriously by Jupiter[33]; and that the *Statesman*'s myth concerns, *inter alia*, our ability to recover in the future, under the saturnian rule of providence, the pure immortal bodies that were corrupted at the Fall, when, under the rule of Jupiter, we succumbed to fate.[34]

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[31] 2 Corinthians 4:16.

[32] See summa 19 of Ficino's *In Phaedrum.* I have just reedited this as *Marsilio Ficino: Commentaries on Plato: Volume I:* Phaedrus *and* Ion (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 122–125.

[33] See my *Nuptial Arithmetic*, pp. 128–129, 134–135, 138.

[34] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XVIII.9.4. See my *Nuptial Arithmetic*, pp. 125–136; and '*Quisque in sphaera sua*: Plato's *Statesman*, Marsilio Ficino's *Platonic Theology*, and the Resurrection of the Body', *Rinascimento*, second series, 47 (2007), pp. 25–48.

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The third aspect of Saturn's special status in the Platonic tradition involves his middle position in the generational triad of Jupiter, Saturn (Cronus) and Uranus, a position that is open, from Ficino's viewpoint, to four interconnected methods of Platonic allegorizing. He addresses these in the tenth chapter of his *Phaedrus* Commentary.[35] Methods one and three are of special significance.

The first method of arranging or 'compounding' the gods is via substances: and here Saturn is the son of the Good and the One and identified therefore with the First Intellect which is pure and full (with a double pun: on *satur* meaning 'full' and on *sacer nus* meaning 'sacred intellect').[36] He presides over the hosts of the intellectual gods and the supermundane gods led by the 12 leading gods in Proclan theology,[37] and also over the World-Soul (identified with Jupiter) and all subordinate souls. As such he is the first to emanate from the One and he is to be identified both with absolute unitary Being and with the dyad of thinking and of thought. Thus for Plotinus and all subsequent Neoplatonists in antiquity he became identified with the second metaphysical hypostasis in Plotinus's system, namely with Mind. Insofar as Mind then became identifiable in Christian metaphysics, or at least in its Arian version, with the Son – the Logos who was in the beginning with God and was God in the famous opening formulations of St. John's Gospel – we might have predicted that Saturn would be used, at least in contexts where classical deities were a legitimate rhetorical recourse, to signify the Son. But the Latin West's constant cooptation of Jupiter to signify the Deity in such contexts, combined with the many negative or problematic associations of Saturn, obviously militated against this, even as Christian philosophers co-opted aspects of the Plotinian Mind to account for aspects of God on the one hand and aspects of the angel, God's first creature, on the other.[38]

The second and fourth methods, which Ficino only passingly mentions, identify the gods first with various Platonic Ideas – and he makes no specific equations, though Saturn is presumably the Idea of Being as Uranus is the Idea of the Good – and then with the gods' attendant daemons. In this latter case one has to make room for many Saturns, since the daemons traditionally take the names of their presiding deities.[39] Such flexibility, indeed, enables a Neoplatonic interpreter to take any and every reference to a deity in classical mythology, and especially if it is introduced

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[35] For a detailed exposition of these four methods, see my *Platonism of Ficino*, chapter 5.

[36] Cicero's *De natura deorum*, II.25.64 derives Saturn's name from his being 'saturated with years' (*quod saturaretur)* in the sense that 'he was in the habit of devouring his sons as Time devours the ages and gorges himself insatiably with the years that are past.' That the name was derived from *sacer nus* comes from Fulgentius, while Varro's *De lingua latina,* V.64 derives it from *satum*, the past participle of *sero*, meaning 'what has been sown'. All three etymologies were entertained for centuries. Additionally, Romans identified Saturn's Greek name *Kronos* with the like-sounding *Chronos* (as in Cicero's work cited above).

[37] See esp. Proclus's own *Platonic Theology*, IV.1.16; and my *Platonism of Ficino*, pp. 115–121, 249–251.

[38] For these transferences, see Kristeller, *Philosophy of Ficino*, pp. 168–169.

[39] Ficino, *In Phaedrum* X.5,12-13 (ed. Allen, pp. 84–85, 90–93).

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by one of the *prisci theologi*, the ancient theologians, and to interpret it monotheistically, provided it serves his argument. But it also enables him to acknowledge the multiple roles of Saturn himself and of subordinate Saturns in what he calls, because polytheistically constructed, the poetic theology and daemonology of the ancients. We should bear in mind, moreover, that Ficino personally exorcised two saturnian daemons, presumably poltergeists, in October 1493 and December 1494 as we learn from two late inserts in his *Timaeus* Commentary.[40] In fact, Saturnian daemons would probably be the most troublesome of all daemons to exorcise given their complex nature, their recalcitrance and their malevolence. And one senses the especial relevance here of the astrological and occult lore associated with Saturn as an inimical planet, rather than the story of the god's castration of his father Uranus, which Ficino read allegorically as a mythical description of the radical nature of Mind's descent from, or procession from, the One.[41]

This takes us to the most important method for elaborating the gods, the third method via properties or powers.[42] Saturn is now interpreted as the turning of the prime understanding towards its own essence. Here Ficino relies in particular on the famous enigma in Plato's *Sixth Letter* 'To Hermias' 323D, which postulates the intellect, i.e., Saturn, as the 'cause' of Jupiter, and postulates the Good as 'the lord and father' of both Saturn and Jupiter.[43] In the intelligible world Saturn's wife, Ops/Rhea, is the 'vital power' with whom Saturn begets Jupiter, the All Soul. As the self-regarding one, Saturn himself is effectively the self-regarding or self-reflecting principle at any ontological level, though the first and exemplary instance of this is the self-regarding of the First Intellect, that is, of the pure separated Intellect.[44] As such it represents the 'turn' in the fundamental Neoplatonic triad of procession-turn-return, where the jovian glance downwards is the procession, and the uranian gaze upwards is the return. In this third method Saturn is the father who swallows his intellectual offspring in eternal contemplation of the intelligible realm – an act that symbolises for Ficino the identity of thinker, thinking, and of thought.

This 'turning', noetic Saturn obviously is not the same as the old, slow, melancholic, contemplative Saturn of the astrological model, who reigns over every 17th year, or over the seventh age of the philosopher still tied to the world, still providing for his body, and still exercising jovian governing powers as well as saturnian reflective and speculative powers. Nor is he the same exactly as the 'supreme intellect' who presides over the cyclical return of the golden age in the great *Statesman* myth, when all things spin back towards their youth, towards the East, towards indeed the Resurrection.

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[40] Ficino, *In Timaeum*, summa 24 (*Opera omnia*, pp. 1469–1470).

[41] Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, pp. 133–138, has an interesting section on violent myths and their interpretation. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* II.3, suggests that the more rebarbative the myth, the profounder its core.

[42] Ficino, *In Phaedrum* X.6-12 (ed. Allen, pp. 84–91).

[43] See Ficino's epitome, *Opera omnia*, p. 1533.4. For the theology of this enigma, see my 'Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 37 (1984), pp. 555–584 (at pp. 568–571).

[44] Ficino, *In Phaedrum*, summa 28; cf. X.6 (ed. Allen, pp. 154–155; cf. 86–87).

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But Plato arrives at a complementary elaboration nonetheless. For Saturn is now identified with the first metaphysical and, concomitantly, dialectical principle to issue from and to return to the One: that is, with Mind and with the self-regarding of Mind; and thus with the dyadic principle that is the very corner stone of Neoplatonism and of Ficino's Christian-Neoplatonic metaphysics. Even so, Saturn remained a troubling figure for Ficino, not, I think, because of his associations with parricidal and infanticidal violence as such, and not because of his baleful astrological and melancholic associations (which Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl successfully explained and qualified in 1964). Why then? For an answer let us turn to a fourth aspect.

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It is my contention here that the figure of Saturn was inextricably entangled for Ficino in the problems generated by Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, which he knew only in the thirteenth-century Latin version by Michael Scot,[45] and indirectly by way of Aquinas's refutations of its arguments.[46] More specifically Saturn was entangled in the controversial doctrine, one that Averroes and the Scholastics traced back to Aristotle himself, of the unity of both the agent and the possible intellects in all men.[47] The whole of the formidable 15th book of Ficino's 18 book summa, the *Platonic Theology* – the longest book by far – is devoted to a thorough refutation of Averroes's positions; and not always on the basis of Ficino's own Neoplatonic convictions as we might have anticipated. The book is so extensive indeed, so packed with argument and detail, so combative in its refutation that it leaves us in no doubt that refuting the great Arab's arguments, and particularly what he saw as Averroes's denial of the soul being the substantial form of the body, was still an abiding concern for Ficino and presumably for his sophisticated Florentine readers.[48] But why such a concern, given their familiarity

[45] For the dating, see R. A. Gauthier, 'Note sur les débuts (1225–1240) du premier averroïsme', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 66 (1982), pp. 321–374.

[46] In his *Summa contra gentiles* and *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas*. See Deborah L. Black, 'Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Aquinas' Critique of Averroes' Psychology', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31/3 (1993), pp. 349–385.

[47] John Monfasani, 'The Averroism of John Argyropoulos', in *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, V (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 1993), pp. 157–208, calls this doctrine 'the distinguishing mark of Averroism' (p. 165).

[48] Ficino's summary refutation continued to be influential: it was the basis for Pierre Bayle's entry on Averroes in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Rotterdam: Michel Bohm, ^{3}1720), p. 383, which in turn shaped Leibniz's account of the history of monopsychism in his *Theodicée* as well as Johann Franz Budde's view of Averroes in his *Traité de l'athéisme et de la superstition*, trans. L. Philon (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1740), VII.2, p. 271. Even more tellingly the first 'modern' history of philosophy, Johann Jacob Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*, 6 vols (Leipzig: Weidemann & Reich, 1766), has a long passage in vol. III, pp. 109–110 on Averroes. But Brucker took this from Ludovico Celio Rodigino's *Lectionum antiquarum libri XVI* (Basel: Ambrose and Aurelius Froben, 1566), III.2, p. 73, which in turn reproduced Ficino's summary in XV.1 (see below)! See Emanuele Coccia, *La trasparenza delle immagini: Averroè e l'averroismo* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2005), pp. 22–27.

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with the Thomist and post-Thomist refutations that had authoritatively established the Christian position; and given that there seems to have been no well-defined group or school of doctrinaire Averroists, Paduan, Bolognese or otherwise, as we were once led to believe?[49] Indeed, most of the leading Italian Aristotelians understood but certainly rejected Averroes's signature doctrine – at least it was signature for them – of the unity of the intellect.[50]

This is not the occasion to explore the entire topic of Ficino's own engagement with Scot's Latin version of Averroes's *De anima* commentary, which itself awaits detailed study. But a preliminary survey of Ficino's understanding of Averroes's views, however incorrect, and of his rejection of them is in order.

Having dealt with many questions and doubts concerning the soul in the preceding books, Ficino turns in Book 15 to five objections still needing clarification. The first of these I shall return to shortly but the next four are recurrent and familiar questions: 2) Why are souls, if they are divine, joined to such lowly bodies? 3) Why are they subsequently so troubled in these bodies? 4) Why then do they abandon them so reluctantly? And 5) What is the status of the soul before entering the body, and what after it departs from it? Ficino's answers to questions 2, 3, and 4 constitute Book 16 and his answer to question 5 commences with the first chapter of Book 17. But his answer to the first and seminal question raised by Averroes – Is there one intellect for all men? – constitutes the whole of Book 15.

The architecture of the Book is set out in Chap. 1. It begins with an account of Averroes's view that intellect is not body (with or without the definite or indefinite article), is not something composed, that is, of matter and form. Nor is it a quality divisible in or dependent on body; nor a form 'such that it can perfect, give life to, and govern body, and adhere to body so that a single composite results from matter and from the intellect's substance.' And here he sees Averroes denying that intellect is 'the life-giving act' perfecting body.[51] Averroes's (in)famous conclusion is rather

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[49] See Ernest Renan, *Averroès e l'averroïsme* (Paris, 1852; third revised edition, Paris, 1866); Paul Oskar Kristeller's two masterful essays: 'Paduan Averroism and Alexandrism in the Light of Recent Studies', in his *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; originally New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 111–118; and 'Renaissance Aristotelianism', now in his *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984–1996), III, pp. 341–357; and Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). See also Maurice-Ruben Hayoun and Alain de Libera, *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991); Dominick A. Iorio, *The Aristotelians of Renaissance Italy: A Philosophical Exposition* (Lewiston, ME: Edwin Mellen, 1991); Valeria Sorge, 'L'Aristotelismo averroista negli studi recenti', *Paradigmi*, 50 (1999), pp. 243–264; Ead., *Profili dell'averroismo bolognese: Metafisica e scienza in Taddeo da Parma [fl. 1318/25]* (Naples: Luciano, 2001); Coccia, *La trasparenza delle immagini*; and Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Arabic Philosophy and Averroism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 113–133.

[50] See Monfasani, 'The Averroism of John Argyropoulos', p. 165, with further references. See also Brian P. Copenhaver, 'Ten Arguments in Search of a Philosopher: Averroes and Aquinas in Ficino's *Platonic Theology*', in *The Rebirth of Platonic Theology*, eds James Hankins and Fabrizio Meroi (Florence: Olschki), forthcoming.

[51] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XV.1.3–4.

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that a/the human mind (or perhaps one should drop the article and simply say human mind), has no link with matter at all and is unitary (i.e., not peculiar to each individual). Thus it has always existed, and will always exist. Nevertheless, it is the lowest of all minds and it is confined to this subcelestial sphere, whereas higher single minds are assigned to each higher celestial sphere. Furthermore, since it is a single intellect, it is properly called the intellect not of this or that man's mind but of the whole human species; it is thus 'wholly and everywhere present in this lower sphere'.[52] So man as we encounter him here on earth consists of a body and a sensitive soul, but not of an intellective soul, although his sensitive soul is the most perfect of its kind and different from that of the beasts. Finally, according to Ficino, Averroes maintains that as many such sensitive souls exist as there are bodies of men, and that they are born and die with these bodies.[53] Hence there are many human sensitive souls, each of us being individually such, but there is only one generically human intellective soul.

The highest power of the sensitive soul Averroes calls the cogitative power (while the Greeks, Ficino is well aware, had placed such a power in the phantasy, broadly defined as preserving the images collected by the common sense from the five particular senses). This power is a particular reason in that it is not guided by nature still, and it seeks to weigh issues and after deliberating to choose. But it can perceive nothing universal: instead it is thinking discursively about particulars. Nonetheless, as queen in Averroist psychology of the brain's middle part between the phantasy (more narrowly defined now) and the memory, the cogitative power is of all the faculties 'closest to' the unitary mind in that this mind is everywhere present to it. With the help of this cogitative power and of the images ablaze in it – and this is the key Averroistic innovation – the unitary mind above it 'perfects its own understanding'.[54] This is the only 'communion' any human being has with mind or with the mind. For mind is not a part of man or a life-giving form for his body; and it is completely separate in both essence and existence – in Aristotelian terms in both potentiality and actuality. Yet mind is everywhere present in a way to all human cogitation, for it derives from the images of any man's particular cogitation the universal species that are its own. As such, any man's cogitation provides the universal mind with an 'occasion' for contemplating, just as coloured light, Ficino says, offers an occasion for seeing to the eye.[55] Given the cogitative occasion, 'a single operation occurs', namely one act of pure understanding that is not in us at all, but in mind alone, prompted as it were by an individual's discursive thinking. Nothing passes over from this Averroistic mind to a man; the entire act is accomplished in mind. Consequently, in himself a man does not understand anything, but the Averroistic mind in a way understands in and through the man. While the cogitative

[52] Ibid., XV.1.12.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., XV.1.13.

[55] Occasionalism plays a key role in medieval philosophy and is especially linked to Avicenna's epistemology.

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power or the cogitative soul is joined to us at birth, the unitary mind only becomes 'present' to us when we are older, when our sensitive soul's images, simulacra or phantasms are 'pure enough' to move the mind, or more accurately to provide the occasion for moving it.[56]

To complicate matters still further, Ficino argues in XV.1.14, that the Averroists – and notice that he has switched here from Averroes to his followers[57] – affirm that mind is compounded not only from two powers but from two substances: the agent power is one substance, the receptive power another. The first, in accordance with its own nature, is 'bright and formative', while the second is 'wholly dark and formable'; and from the eternal bonding of these two substances comes, 'with respect to its being', a unitary soul. For 'in nature a single thing is similarly compounded, with respect to its being, from matter and form.' The Averroists call the first substance the agent intellect, the second, the formable or receptive or possible intellect; and they suppose that the agent intellect, 'since it is self-existing act, always understands itself through itself in such a way that in regarding its own essence it sees itself, and through itself the celestial minds too.' Such understanding, so runs the argument of Averroes and his disciples, is its very essence. But since its essence is always united to the receptive intellect, they suppose 'it is through this same intellectual essence that the receptive intellect always understands the agent intellect,' whose essence is alike both essence and the act of understanding. It understands too 'the higher minds'. Hence this understanding is 'a single, stable, and eternal act in the universal intellect or soul'; and the soul/intellect distinction is blurred here, indeed is unimportant, since the soul is intellective soul.

In this one intellect's formable part, however, there exists another understanding also, 'everlasting indeed but changing, temporal, and manifold, which is borrowed from us (*mutuatur a nobis*).' Because it adheres more closely to the agent intellect than it does to our phantasy but is allotted 'a temporal cognition' on account of its union with our temporal phantasy, the Averroists regard it as obvious, Ficino says, that, 'on account of its union with that eternal intellect,' this changing and manifold understanding of the receptive intellect is also eternal. It sees more clearly than our merely temporal cognition to the extent that it is more akin to the impersonal agent intellect than to our personal phantasy.[58]

In us, however, the Averroists suppose that 'only a doubtful and changeable knowledge is being individually pursued.'[59] Ficino gives an example. When Pythagoras was alive, the single intellect 'would have garnered the assemblage of Pythagorean knowledge by way of the images of things ablaze in Pythagoras's cogitation.' But when he died and the images had faded away, that intellect 'would have lost

[56] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XV.1.13.

[57] It is difficult to determine who these Averroists might be, particularly given the later reference in 15.17.9 to 'Averroists of more recent times'. Among the possibilities are John of Jandun, Paul of Venice, Niccolò Tignosi, and Nicoletto Vernia; but there must be other, more plausible candidates. See Copenhaver, 'Ten Arguments', p. 14.

[58] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XV.1.14.

[59] Ibid., XV.1.15.

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both the species culled from the images' and the Pythagorean knowledge itself, for 363
'the species were created and sustained by these images.' Even when Pythagoras 364
was alive, in fact, 'as often as his own cogitation ceased its activity, that intellect 365
would have ceased acting in, or in the presence of, Pythagoras (*apud Pythagoram*).' 366
It would – absurdly in Ficino's view – 'have received, forgotten, and received again.' 367
And it would have done the same in the case of Plato and similarly with other 368
individuals day after day. 'Everywhere and at every time,' the Averroistic argument 369
goes, this unitary mind 'is replenished in various ways through the various souls 370
of men,' and thus it is variously nourished. 'It receives as many species as there are 371
images in us' – just as a mirror, in the idola-based optics familiar to Ficino, receives 372
images from bodies – and moreover 'it produces as many acts of understanding.' 373
It also produces in itself, apparently, the diverse habits, that is, the potentiality 374
we have for exercising the disciplines which deal with, and correspond to, the diver- 375
sity of human studies. And since men in their numberless multitudes 'daily apply 376
themselves to the understanding of all things,' that unitary intellect 'daily learns 377
all things from this multitude.' Thus, through the species it culls from our images, 378
the receptive intellect comes to know inferior things; and 'eventually, in all men 379
and in the wisest of men, it comes to know itself.'[60] 380

This emphasis on self-knowledge is remarkable given the centrality of the notion 381
in classical ethics; and it suggests that the Averroistic mind is in some haunting 382
respects a great man, at least on occasions, seeking to know himself, even as, from 383
the opposite perspective, it is also the lowest of the planetary intellects that already 384
know themselves. But why should such a mind be dependent on us at all, however 385
fleetingly, given the insufficiency and transience of our knowledge? And does its 386
duality as an agent and a passive intellect mirror a complimentary duality in the 387
higher, celestial intellects? And how and why does this mind continually forget 388
what it has learned? These and other such questions point to Ficino's realization that 389
the Averroistic mind was vulnerable to many of the problems and contradictions 390
confronting us in treating of the human mind. Hypostasizing the human mind, that 391
is, only transfers familiar epistemological and ethical problems from the individual 392
or particular to the general, but without, from Ficino's viewpoint, resolving them. 393

The Averroists argue finally, writes Ficino in XV.1.16, that 'the marvellous con- 394
nection of things' is founded on this complex interactive process between mind and 395
ourselves as essentially sensitive souls with cogitative powers. For forms exist that are 396
wholly free of matter, and these incorporeal forms are the angels, the pure intellects 397
themselves, amongst whom we find, Ficino adduces on Thomist grounds, not many 398
angels existing in one angelic species, but rather as many species of angels existing as 399
there are individual angels. Completely corporeal forms also exist, 'hosts of them in 400
the same species,' as in the case of the irrational souls of animals, for instance, and of 401
the forms inferior even to them. But interposed, so the Averroists falsely maintain, is 402
'a compound made from man and from mind – from the many human souls and from 403
one mind – like an enormous monster consisting of many limbs and one head, where 404

[60] Ibid.

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the absolute form joins with things corporeal and things corporeal in turn with it.' Whereas what is absolutely one remains in itself, as is right and proper, 'what is corporeal becomes manifold, while one mind suffices for numberless souls.' The Averroists designate that compound made from mind and from each one of us 'the intellectual man'. But they call each of us, when we are separated from mind, just a 'cogitative man', affirming that 'the first, the intellectual man, temporarily understands something, because a part of him, his mind, understands'; but that the subordinate kind of man, the cogitative man, understands absolutely nothing.[61]

This is Ficino's own preliminary one-chapter summary of the complex set of Averroistic propositions he is setting out to refute in the course of Book 15,[62] though in the end he will be prepared to offer the following eclectic compromise: to accept from Averroes the notion that the receptive or possible intellect is immortal; and to accept from Alexander of Aphrodisias the notions that such an intellect is a power naturally implanted in the soul and that there are as many receptive intellects as there are souls. Platonic, Christian and Arab theologians can agree at least, and this is Ficino's conclusion for the whole book, that human souls are immortal, just as the original Aristotelians (i.e., not the later Averroists) had also argued.[63] Even so, the length of this book, twice that of any other, and the fact that it is dense with *quaestiones disputatae* as Ficino attacks one after another of Averroes's major propositions and pursues their consequences, speaks to two intensely held convictions: on the one hand that our soul is both immortal and essentially intellectual and that our highest mode of existence is therefore ultimately as serene intellects in the act of contemplation; and on the other, that the notion of a unitary soul or a unitary intellect of the kind that Ficino interpreted Averroes as postulating is anathema ethically and psychologically, as well as being intellectually unacceptable.

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However, this labyrinthine rebuttal, perhaps like other labyrinthine rebuttals, speaks, if not to a fascination with, then surely to an inability or reluctance to let go of, the problems and challenges presented by the great commentator on Aristotle. Yet it is neither in my view the occasionalism, nor the peculiarly critical role of images or phantasms in occasionalism, *pace* Coulianu,[64] nor some of the other intricacies of

[61] Ibid.

[62] For this nexus of arguments, see Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and His Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 82–103; and more generally Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Ficino of course is presenting his own account.

[63] Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, XV.19.11.

[64] Ioan Petru Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); this was originally published in French as *Eros et magie à la Renaissance, 1484* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984). Though provocative, Couliano's claims with regard to Ficino are often over-stated and should be approached with considerable caution. On phantasms in Ficino, see my *Icastes: Marsilio Ficino's Interpretation of Plato's* Sophist (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), chapter 5.

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the Averroistic system that continued to attract and to repel Ficino. Rather, I suspect, it was the core theory of the one separate intellect for all human beings, even if this is categorised as the 'lowest' of all intellects. For the theory of a unitary intellect per se has far-reaching implications, since mono-nousism (or mono-noeticism) or mono-psychism[65] is not just the hallmark of Averroism: it is also fundamental to the metaphysical notion of the hypostasised *nous* in Middle Platonism, and above all in Neoplatonism, as the influential studies of Philip Merlan,[66] John Dillon,[67] and others have amply demonstrated.[68]

For Ficino, I suggest, Averroes became in several unsettling ways not so much the perverter of the central propositions in Aristotle's *De anima* 3.5.340a10-25 as a subtle advocate – though perforce indirectly and inadvertently, since he would not have acknowledged or recognised this himself in the twelfth century – of some of the central propositions that Ficino had continually encountered and enthusiastically embraced in Plotinus's analysis of *nous*. And this is even as Plotinus was, like the Middle Platonists before him and the Neoplatonists he inspired after him, a thinker who had systematically subordinated Aristotle to Plato.[69] Consequently – and this is perhaps a psychological, or even a mono-psychological hypothesis – it was critically important for Ficino to discredit Averroes. This was in part at least because of the baleful, or at least misleading, implications of his doctrines for a study of the central Plotinian hypostasis that Ficino had so long and so carefully sought to accommodate to Christian thought – and specifically to accommodate to the notion of ourselves, not as individualised aspects of a single impersonal intellect, the *nous*, but as many created intellectual beings, *noes* indeed like the angels, who yearn to contemplate our Creator. In this regard Averroes, *malgré soi*, must have posed an insidious threat. For he was the spokesman for an austere, impersonal, Idea-oriented intellectualism that closely resembled – perhaps too closely resembled – the austere intellectualism of Plotinus's own ethics and metaphysics, keyed as they were, not to a Logos theology of the incarnate Word, but to a unitary intellect as the prime intelligible being.[70] Indeed, Averroes's unitary intellect as Ficino understood it, though quite distinct metaphysically and epistemologically from Plotinus's *nous* (being at the opposite end of the scale of intellects), must have appeared to Ficino,

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[65] Again, one could distinguish between mono-psychism and mono-nousism, but not surely when the highest soul is intellective as is the case in Platonism and Aristotelianism alike.

[66] Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neo-Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Nijhoff, [1963] 1969); also his *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Nijhoff, [1953] 1960).

[67] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* passim.

[68] The term monopsychism has a history that goes back at least to Leibniz; see n. 48 above.

[69] We must leave aside the intricate story of Averroes's own development and his prior encounter with various Neoplatonic texts and propositions in the work of his predecessors, notably al-Ghazālī and Avicenna.

[70] A cognate problem is the extent to which Averroes is in effect a Plotinian commentator, or one influenced by the Plotinian formulations of his Arabic predecessors, when it comes to interpreting the famous Aristotelian passage on *nous*.

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at least during the early 1470s when he was composing his *Platonic Theology*, as a kind of dangerous Plotinian look-alike, or noetic similar, or revenant that had to be exorcised as one exorcises saturnian poltergeists.

Nonetheless, the situation was fraught with contradictions. Ficino thought of Plotinus himself, for all his noeticism, as the 'beloved son' in whom Plato was well pleased – to use his own quasi-sacrilegious biblical phrasing. He revered him, moreover, as one of the first and greatest of the Church Fathers in all but name, supposing him acquainted not only with Johannine and Pauline theology, but, confusingly, with the apophatic theology of Proclus's great sixth century disciple, Pseudo-Dionysius (whose works Ficino and his contemporaries mistakenly attributed to St. Paul's Athenian convert, the first century Areopagite, the 'crown' indeed of a first century Platonic-Christian theology).[71] Most importantly, Ficino's whole lifetime endeavour was focused on elaborating a Plotinian-Christian metaphysics centred upon *nous, nous* in God, in the angels, and in souls.

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By way of conclusion let me hazard two tardy saturnian speculations.

The first is to wonder whether the antagonistic encounter with Averroes in Book 15 of the *Platonic Theology* was not another chapter in Ficino's many-sided and evolving response to Saturn; and whether in the war against Averroes's doctrine of the unicity of the intellect he was not also waging war, albeit undeclared, against a manifestation or species of Saturnianism, a Saturnianism, that is, with something of its cold, remote, contemplatively slow astrological history; and one too with something of its ancient infanticidal if not parricidal mythological associations, given that self-reflective thinking in abstractions is traditionally deemed to be hostile – since it feeds upon its own succession of offspring – to the consideration of mundane particulars. We recall that Saturn was on the Ascendant in its 'day abode' of watery Aquarius in Ficino's own horoscope; and that as a planet it fascinated and attracted and repelled him, as we learn from a letter to his 'unique' friend Cavalcanti,[72] though it never totally eclipsed his lifetime's companionship as a scholar-interpreter with Mercury.

The second speculation, conversely, is to suggest that Saturn, as the unitary hypostasis *nous*, the self-regarding intellect as we have seen from Ficino's *Phaedrus* Commentary, mythologises and at the same time planetises (if I may coin the term) one of the more troubling dimensions for a devout Christian of ancient Neoplatonic metaphysics. This is its universal, impersonal, aloofly abstract conception of Mind and of the *vita contemplativa*. Undoubtedly, Saturn continued to haunt Ficino

[71] See my *Synoptic Art: Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Florence: Olschki, 1998), pp. 90–92, and in general chapter 2. The appropriation of God's words, 'This is my beloved son', to describe Plotinus is Ficino's own choice in the closing lines of his preface for the Plotinus commentary (*Opera omnia*, p. 1548.1); see Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, pp. 23–24.

[72] Ficino, *Opera omnia*, p. 732.3: 'Omnes omnium laudes referantur in Deum.'

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intellectually long after his body and his temperamental complexion, and thus his corporeal and emotional life, had achieved a balancing – an obviously successful balancing given his immensely productive career – of the humours and their dependent moods. For a self-regarding Plotinian (or Averroistic) Saturn remained, I would suggest, the 'familiar compound ghost' of Ficino's own philosophical journey to Emmaus in search of salvation; and in search too of the ancient union of theology and philosophy that was for him the hallmark of the golden age of the seventh, most aged, and most distant planet of the poets and their theogonies and cosmogonies, as well as of traditional astrology. For Saturn had devoured his own offspring just as Ficino imagines Averroes's single intellect, if it were ever to exist, would be continuously devouring the thoughts of all men and denying them the right to come into their own, both as rational souls and as independent, immortal, contemplative intellects, and not merely as phantasy-anchored cogitators of the divine.

Does Ficino's work culminate, however, in 'a glorification of Saturn' at the very time when he hypothetically became, in the claim of Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl's triumphal conclusion to their second chapter of *Saturn and Melancholy*, 'the chief patron of the Platonic Academy at Florence'?[73] Prescinding from the issue of whether there was anything even remotely resembling a Florentine Platonic Academy – a Medicean propaganda construct which James Hankins in a series of five essays has brilliantly called into question from a variety of perspectives[74] – the answer is probably in the negative, given the kaleidoscopic permutations of Ficino's poetic theologising throughout his career. But is there one saturnian intellect, one *insenescibilis intellectus* with its 'dry light', as the Heraclitus maxim denominates it,[75] for all men? For Ficino at least, the most ardent of the fifteenth century's anti-Averroist epistemologists and metaphysicians, the answer is a resounding No!

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[73] *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 273.

[74] Now collected in James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), II, pp. 187–395. Another version of one of these essays, 'The Invention of the Platonic Academy at Florence', has appeared as 'The Platonic Academy of Florence and Renaissance Historiography', in *Forme del Neoplatonismo: Dall'eredità ficiniana ai platonici di Cambridge*, ed. Luisa Simonutti (Florence: Olschki, 2007), pp. 75–96. For a contrary view, see Arthur Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Id., 'The Platonic Academy of Florence', in *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, eds Michael J. B. Allen and Valery Rees, with Martin Davies (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 359–376.

[75] Fragment 118 in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch*, ed. by Hermann Diels, 3 vols (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1903; [4]1922), I, p. 100, much quoted by Ficino: see, for example, *Platonic Theology*, VI.2.20.

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Chapter 6
The Transmutations of a Young Averroist: Agostino Nifo's Commentary on the *Destructio Destructionum* of Averroes and the Nature of Celestial Influences

Nicholas Holland

Agostino Nifo and the Destructio Destructionum *of Averroes*

Commentator, philosopher, teacher, polemicist, astrologer, doctor, inquirer into the occult… Because of the work of many scholars over the last century we are now familiar with the idea that Agostino Nifo (1470–1538) was a man of wide interests and, perhaps, many public or authorial masks.[1] That Nifo was greatly interested in and influenced by the works of Averroes and philosophers within the Averroist tradition is well-known. Modern accounts of Nifo's Averroism have tended to focus in particular on Nifo's treatment of Averroes's conception of the unitary intellect for all men and on the processes of intellection, although some consideration has been given to other aspects of Nifo's interest in the thought of Averroes.[2] Nifo's first

I would like to thank Guido Giglioni for his advice and encouragement while preparing this study.

[1] Essential starting-points for the study of Nifo are the entries by Edward P. Mahoney in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 16 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970–1980), X, pp. 122–124, and by Stefano Perfetti in the *New Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 8 vols (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons and Gale/Cengage Learning 2008), V, pp. 280–281; and also the *Bibliografia di Agostino Nifo* by Ennio De Bellis (Florence: Olschki, 2005).

[2] Seminal discussions which capture something of the range of Nifo's interests include, with regard to the soul and intellection, Bruno Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), esp. pp. 142, 376–383; Eckhard Kessler, 'The Intellective Soul', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 485–534, 496–500 and 504–507; Leen Spruit, 'Agostino Nifo's *De intellectu*: Sources and Ideas', *Bruniana et Campanelliana*, 8 (2007), pp. 625–639; with regard to astrology and demonology, Paola Zambelli, 'I problemi metodologici del necromante Agostino Nifo', *Medioevo*, 1 (1975), pp. 129–171; Ead., 'Fine del mondo o inizio della propaganda?

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published works are his commentary on a partial translation into Latin of a major work of Averroes, the *Destructio destructionum*, and another short work with important connections to the work of Averroes, the *De sensu agente*.[3] Both of these works were first published as a companion to the edition of the Latin works of Aristotle and Averroes which Nifo had edited and which had been published by Hieronymous Scotus in 1495 and 1496.[4] These are the only works known to have been published by Nifo before his departure from Padua in 1499.[5]

The edition of the *Destructio destructionum* with Nifo's commentary is also the first appearance in print of a Latin translation of Averroes's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*). The *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* is Averroes's response to the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Refutation of the Philosophers*) of al-Ghazālī. The text is Averroes's attempt to establish an Aristotelian philosophy which is distinct not only from that of al-Ghazālī, but also from that of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). In its complete Arabic form it covers a significant number of questions in metaphysics and natural sciences. It develops important arguments concerning, among other matters, the creation of the universe, the nature of celestial influence and the philosophical understanding of God.[6]

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Astrologia, filosofia della storia e propaganda politico-religiosa nel dibattito sulla congiunzione del 1524', in *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura: Convegno internazionale di studi* (Florence: Olschki, 1982), pp. 291–368 (352–356); Ead., *L'ambigua natura della magia: Filosofi, streghe, riti nel Rinascimento* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1991), pp. 240–241; Brian P. Copenhaver, 'Astrology and Magic', in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, pp. 264–300 (272); with regard to scientific argument, William A. Wallace, *Causality and Scientific Explanation*, 2 vols (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972–1974), I, pp. 139–144. Studies of Nifo's interest in Averroes with particular relevance to this study are, Edward P. Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science in Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo', in *Scienza e filosofia all'Università di Padova nel Quattrocento*, ed. Antonino Poppi (Padua and Trieste: Edizioni Lint, 1983), pp. 135–202, esp. pp. 192–200; Id., 'Agostino Nifo's Early Views on Immortality', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 8 (1970), pp. 451–460; Id., 'Plato and Aristotle in the Thought of Agostino Nifo (ca. 1470–1538)', in *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), V, pp. 81–101.

[3] Agostino Nifo, *Destructiones destructionum Averrois cum Augustini Niphi de Suessa expositione. Eiusdem Augustini questio de sensu agente* (Venice: Ottaviano Scoto, 1497). For this study the more familiar title *Destructio destructionum* is adpoted to refer to this work.

[4] See also De Bellis, *Bibliografia*, p. 21.

[5] On the obscurity of the reasons for Nifo's departure from Padua in 1499, see Zambelli, 'Problemi metodologici', pp. 135–136 (144–146). On the question of the origins of Nifo's *De intellectu* and his first *De anima* commentary (both first published 1503) prior to 1499, see ibid, p. 136.

[6] For an overview of the arguments in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, see Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and his Philosophy* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), esp. pp. 14, 179–196 and the introduction in Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, ed. Simon van den Bergh, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press; London: Luzac, 1954), I, pp. ix–xxxvi. (References to, and quotations from, the English translation of *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* are from this edition).

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Nifo's edition of the *Destructio* uses the Latin translation prepared in the fourteenth century by a Calonymos ben Calonymos of Arles.[7] This work of Averroes was hardly known in any form in the Latin West during the Middle Ages and Pierre Duhem has noted that, among Latin scholastics, knowledge of the ideas it contains seems to have been acquired through Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* and passages in the commentaries of Averroes where similar views appear.[8]

Interest in the *Destructio* becomes evident in Italy during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In addition to the evidence presented by Nifo's first printed edition, Edward P. Mahoney notes that the *Destructio* is cited by Elijah Delmedigo, a contemporary and associate of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola who also had connections with the Veneto.[9] It seems that Pico himself owned one

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[7] Moritz Steinschneider notes that the manuscript copy of the translation in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Lat. 2434) dates its execution to 1328. Following Renan, Steinschneider identifies another probable manuscript in the Marciana, Venice (Lat. 251), a work listed by Kristeller as 'Averroes, de aeternitate mundi contra Algazel'. I consulted both the Vatican copy and a third manuscript in the Riccardiana, Florence (Lat. 117) which are substantially similar in content (see below, footnotes 14 and 22). The extant manuscripts of this translation and Nifo's preparation of the medieval translation for his edition are subjects which merit further consideration, in particular since Nifo states (*Expositio*, fol. 103^{r}b) he had access to another translation of the *Destructio destructionum* by a 'Nicolaus Hispanus' ('Nicholas the Spaniard'). See Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher: Ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters, meist nach handschriftlichen Quellen* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographischen Bureaus, 1893), pp. 330–332; Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme: essai historique* (1852, repr. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1861), p. 66; Beatrice H. Zedler, 'Introduction' to Averroes, *Destructio destructionum philosophiae Algazelis in the Latin Version of Calo Calonymos*, ed. B. H. Zedler (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press 1961), pp. 24–29; Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science', pp. 173–174, 179–181; P. O. Kristeller, Iter Italicum: *A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and Other Libraries*, 6 vols and Index (London and Leiden: The Warburg Institute and Brill, 1963–1997), I, p. 185 and II, p. 212. On Renan and Averroes, see also the chapters by Marenbon and Akasoy in this volume.

[8] A notable exception to this generalisation, reported by Zedler, is the thirteenth-century Spanish Dominican Raymond Martin, who made use of an Arabic or Hebrew version in the preparation of his *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* (completed 1278). See Zedler, 'Introduction', pp. 21–23; Pierre Duhem, *Système du monde: Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, 10 vols (Paris: Hermann, 1913–1959), IV, p. 514, cited by Zedler, ibid, p. 21.

[9] Edward P. Mahoney, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Elia Delmedigo, Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo', in *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Convegno internazionale di studi nel cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte (1494–1994)*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki 1997), II, pp. 127–156 (128–130); Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science', p. 160, n. 118, suggests that Nifo's commentary on Averroes's *Destructio* may include some criticisms of Delmedigo. See Carlos Fraenkel's chapter in this volume.

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or more copies of the *Destructio*.[10] Nifo indicates that the copy used for his edition was provided by the noble Hieronymus Bernardus of Venice.[11] A second Latin version, this time translated from a Hebrew version, was subsequently published in Venice in 1527 by another translator named Calonymos, a Neapolitan physician who lived for a time in Venice.[12] This later Calonymos notes in the dedication to his edition that his aim was to address the deficiencies of the 'shortened and indeed obscure fragment of the *Destructio* of Algazel and the *Destructio destructionum*' of the earlier Latin translation. His translation was republished three times during the sixteenth century.[13]

Nifo's edition, indeed, omits significant parts of the full Arabic text of the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, including two of Averroes's metaphysical discussions and all of the discussions on the natural sciences. Nifo indicates in the closing address of his commentary that he was not in possession of a copy of the discussions on the natural sciences when he started work on the commentary and that he received a copy from a student named Andreas de Minutis too late for their inclusion in the edition. It is not known whether he subsequently produced the exposition of these which he promises to undertake.[14] In his introduction to the edition, Nifo himself explains that the book is 'difficult' due to the 'bad translation' and the 'hard words and meanings' which it contains. His aim is to make a valuable work available with his exposition, even if it contains 'many questions against we Christians.' Averroes's authorship of the work is confirmed, Nifo explains, by the reference he makes in his Long Commentary on the *Physica* to his discussion in another work of the views of al-Ghazālī.[15]

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[10] Pearl Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola* (New York: Morningside Heights, 1936), p. 259, notes a manuscript work (inventory item 1052) variously listed as 'Auerois contra Algazelem' and 'Liber impugnacionum Auerois' in the early inventories of Pico's library. Given that Pico died in 1494, Kibre's apparent identification (p. 131), in addition, of a printed edition of a work listed as *Destructio destructioni* [sic.] (inventory number 96) presents obvious chronological difficulties if Nifo's is the first printed edition. On the inventories and the acquisition in 1498 of Pico's library by Domenico Grimani, the dedicatee of Nifo's commentary on Averroes's *Destructio*, see ibid, pp. 1–10, 17–18.

[11] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 2^{v}a. Hieronymus Bernardus is also mentioned in Nifo's closing address, fol. 123^{v}a, as the son of 'master (*dominus*) Petrus.' Unless otherwise indicated translations from Latin works are by the author.

[12] Zedler, 'Introduction', pp. 26–29.

[13] Translation ibid, pp. 26–27 (the Latin text of the dedication is presented ibid, pp. 57–58).

[14] Nifo, *Expositio*, fols 123^{r}b-^{v}a. See also Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science', pp. 179–180. The metaphysical discussions not included in Nifo's edition are the tenth and sixteenth in the Van den Bergh edition. Nifo's edition ends at the second line of p. 299 of Van den Bergh's edition. MSS Vat. Lat. 2434 and Ricc. Lat. 117 (see above, footnote 7) also lack the same metaphysical discussions, but include two disputes on the natural sciences omitted in Nifo's edition.

[15] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 2^{v}a. See Averroes, Long Commentary on *Physica*, VIII, t. c. 3, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1962), IV, fol. 340^{r}F.

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Nifo's Averroist Accounts of Celestial Influences and Intentions

Averroes's interpretation of the views of Aristotle, as set out in *Metaphysica*, *Physica* and *De coelo et mundo*, raised a number of important questions concerning God, the heavens and their influence on the sublunary world for its Latin reader.[16] In his Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, Averroes confirms God's place as first and final cause, as 'that which moves everything' (*illud quod movet omne*) and as the 'perfection of the being who understands' (*perfectio intelligentis*).[17] However, in the Long Commentaries on *Physica* and *De coelo et mundo*, he explores the causes of motion in the universe in terms of a physics of motion distinct from that of *Metaphysica*.[18] In his Long Commentary on *De coelo et mundo*, Averroes identifies the 'first cause' of all movement as the unchangeable mover (*motor… non transmutabilis*) which moves Aristotle's 'first thing moved.' To cause perpetual motion this 'mover of the heavens' is necessarily 'simple' (*simplex* – that is not subject to generation or corruption), and

[16] Averroes's views on these matters continue to be a subject for scholarly discussion and a full restatement of medieval, early modern or modern debates in the context of Nifo's Averroism lies beyond the scope of this study. Major modern contributions to the discussion of Averroes's theories of cosmology and causation are Barry S. Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 220–257; David Twetten, 'Averroes' Prime Mover Argument', in *Averroes et les averroismes juif et latin*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 9–75. On the account in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, in particular, see also Leaman, *Averroes*, pp. 63–71. On the conflict of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas in Averroes, see Leaman, *Averroes*, pp. 63–71. On the vexed question of the influence of emanational theories of causality on Averroes's thought, see, in particular, Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, pp. 228, 230–231 and 254–257 and Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, pp. 248–255. On the reception of the Arabic tradition of physics in the Latin philosophy of the later Middle Ages, see James A. Weisheipl, 'The Interpretation of Aristotle's Physics and the Science of Motion', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, eds Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 521–536 (521–529); with reference to fifteenth-century Padua, see Antonino Poppi, *Causalità e infinità nella scuola padovana dal 1480 al 1513* (Padua: Antenore, 1966); with particular reference to Nifo's debt to Averroes in his commentary on *Destructio destructionum*, see Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science', esp. pp. 177–179, 189–200.

[17] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII, t. c. 39, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 323^{r}D (relating to *Metaphysica*, 1072b); ibid, t. c. 51 (relating to 1074b15ff), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 335^{r}F. On the final cause in Averroes, see Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, pp. 230–231, 242–248.

[18] See Averroes's comments on the distinction between sciences of metaphysics and physics in Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII, t. c. 44 (relating to 1073a25ff), in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 328^{r}E. For insights into the issues raised, see Twetten's comments, 'Averroes' Prime Mover Argument', p. 39, that Averroes's argument in the *Physica* leaves God no more 'separate' than any other 'celestial soul' and yet 'it would seem that the first cause or God is not a celestial soul,' and Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, pp. 264–265, who notes that Averroes's 'account of efficient causes … ceases to be viable beyond the realm of what Averroes would have called sublunary physics.'

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also 'spiritual' (*spiritualis*), as opposed to 'corporeal' (*corporeus*).[19] Between the first mover and the sublunary world are the spiritual 'movers of the celestial bodies' (often described as the celestial (separate) intelligences), which Averroes believes cannot be subject to 'alteration'.[20]

A further level of complexity is added to the question of universal causality by Averroes's account of the action of the heavens on the sublunary world. In the *Destructio destructionum*, Averroes states that the order of the sublunary world is, for a philosopher, without doubt only evidence of a final cause in the heavens, not of an efficient cause. Kogan explains Averroes's view here as the assertion of a final cause 'in second order concepts, or concepts about concepts rather than concepts about things themselves,' which is 'a necessary condition for the existence of sublunary particulars,' but which is associated with a limited human understanding of God and the heavens.[21] Averroes's circumspection concerning the intelligibility of celestial influences is also reflected in the discussions on the natural sciences which follow the metaphysical discussions in his *Destructio destructionum*. There he states that 'judicial astrology' cannot be considered a natural science, but only 'a prognostication of future events' which 'is of the same type as augury and vaticination.' As such, it is to be classified, alongside the interpretation of dreams, as a 'prognosticating science'. In the same passage, Averroes also applies caution in denying the powers of the 'telesmatical

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[19] Averroes, Long Commentary on *De coelo et mundo*, II, t. c. 36, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fol. 120^{r}F-^{v}G. On Aristotle's account of the movers of the celestial spheres, see *De coelo et mundo*, II, 285a and 292a and *Metaphysica*, XII, 1074a. See also the discussion in Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and their Sequel* (London: Duckworth, 1988), pp. 219–226.

[20] Averroes, Long Commentary on *De coelo et mundo*, II, t.c. 36, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fol. 120^{r}C. The question of whether celestial souls of some kind exist in addition to celestial intelligences in Averroes is the subject of some discussion among modern scholars. See, Twetten, 'Averroes' Prime Mover Argument', pp. 59–60, and Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, p. 226, n. 33. In his commentary on the *Destructio destructionum*, Nifo seems to be clear that, in questions of physics, the movers must be intelligences (*intelligentia*): *Expositio*, fol. 119^{r}A; cf. Averroes, Long Commentary on *De coelo et mundo*, II, t.c. 37, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fol. 120^{v}G-H. In this study, I use the term 'sublunary world', sometimes referred to in the *Destructio* as the 'world of lower beings' (*mundus inferiorum*), to describe that part of the Aristotelian universe which is lower than the moon and subject to generation and corruption. I use the term 'heavens' to describe the world of the moving and fixed stars and their movers. I use the term 'universe' to describe the totality of the heavens and the sublunary world.

[21] Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Discussion 15, I, 299: 'none of the philosophers doubts that there is here a final cause in second intention'; Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, pp. 196–197. Leaman notes that Averroes's approach to the way in which the heavens affect the sublunary bodies 'replicates the Aristotelian vagueness' (*Averroes*, p. 71). On the complex question of necessity and determinism in Aristotle and the classical tradition, see Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1980). On the notions of final, formal and efficient cause in Aristotle, see *Physica*, 194b–195a, and *Metaphysica*, 1013–1014a.

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art… for if we assume the positions of the spheres to exert a power on artificial products, this power will remain inside the product and not pass on to things outside it'.[22]

The works of Averroes, therefore, gave the Latin West a series of conceptually separate, yet overlapping, ideas concerning the causal relationship between God and his universe and the operation of the heavens on the sublunary world, many of which could not be readily shown to be congruent with Christian or Jewish thought. In the Latin tradition, the status of God as the 'first mover' of Aristotle's *Metaphysica*, and as an efficient as well as final cause of movement in the universe, was a notable source of controversy through to the debates of the Paduan Averroists in the later fifteenth century.[23] Averroes's assertion, as presented in the *Destructio destructionum*, that the causal relationship between the actions of heavenly bodies and their effects in the sublunary world are not of a kind which is susceptible to simple explanation by man adds a further level of complexity to any understanding of divine and heavenly causality.

Nifo's interpretations of the views of Averroes in the *Destructio* commentary and *De sensu agente* merit careful consideration, since they show both Nifo's interest in particular aspects of Averroes's thought concerning celestial influence and also the impact on his understanding of Averroes of cognate ideas in the work of other philosophers. Nifo's interpretation of God's agency as a formal cause is, for example, in the third dispute of the *Destructio* commentary, reliant on the ideas of Albertus Magnus. In the Latin text of the *Destructio destructionum*, Averroes introduces the notion that the 'first principle' (*primum principium*) is the unifying 'efficient cause, form and final cause' of 'living beings.'[24] In the eleventh dispute, Nifo discusses God's role as a formal cause in more detail. He points out, correctly, how Averroes rejects the Avicennan notion of the *dator* or *creator formarum* or *colcodea*, i.e., the lowest of a series of emanated intelligences which causes existence in the sublunary world.[25] However, as Mahoney has shown, Nifo's account of Averroism here, and in

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[22] Averroes, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, 'About the Natural Sciences', p. 312. As already noted, these discussions on the natural sciences are not included by Nifo in his edition. However, a version of the passage cited (most notably lacking a phrase equivalent to the 'prognosticating science' phrase) does appear in the earlier of the extant Latin translations of the *Destructio*, to which Nifo may have had access. See MSS Vat. Lat. 2434, f. 51^{v}b and Ricc. Lat. 117, f. 113^{v}a. See also above, footnotes 7 and 14.

[23] See Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo dal secolo XIV al XVI*, p. 184, and Poppi, *Causalità e infinità nella scuola padovana*, pp. 143–150, 222–236.

[24] Translation from the *textus* of the *Expositio*, third dispute, dub. xviii, fol. 46ra. See also Nifo's attribution of a similar statement concerning the 'first mover' to Aristotle, in *Expositio*, ninth dispute, dub. ii, fol. 98^{rb}. Nifo also attributes an expanded notion of this idea to Averroes in his *De primi motoris infinitate*, appended to his commentary on the *De generatione et corruptione* (Venice: Heir of Girolamo Scoto, 1577), fols 109va-114^{rb}, 110^{vab}. De Bellis, *Bibliografia di Agostino Nifo*, p. 149 notes a subscript to the first edition of 1526, which dates the completion of this work to 1504.

[25] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 107^{vb}. On Nifo's introduction of the term *colcodea* in this context see H. A Wolfson, 'Colcodea', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 36 (1945), pp. 179–182; repr. in Id. *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, eds Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973–1977), II, pp. 573–576.

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other places, seems to be indebted to the way that Albertus Magnus appropriated the axiom 'the work of nature is the work of intelligence'. Among the crucial consequences deriving from Albertus's interpretation was the idea of nature as, in the words of James A. Weisheipl, 'not truly *blind*,' in the sense of 'acting without direction,' but 'innately ordered to an end it does not see, yet is seen for it by someone with intelligence who is called the *conditor* (creator), *artifex* (artist), or *opifex naturae* (workman of nature)'.[26] Furthermore, as will become apparent below, Nifo's scientific method also has affinities with Albertus's understanding of the 'suppositional necessity' of nature: that is, a kind of knowledge 'based on the supposition of a particular end being achieved', so that 'when one understands this procedure he sees why all four causes – final and efficient as well as formal and material – function in physical demonstrations'.[27] By contrast to Averroes's circumspection regarding the subject, Nifo shares with Albertus a disposition towards the position that causes in nature can be intelligible.

In the context of the question of natural intelligibility, Nifo's treatment of Averroes's concept of 'secondary intention' in the fourteenth dispute also deserves further consideration. 'Intention' (*intentio*), in the sense of that which conveys the abstraction or 'quiddity' of something, encompasses a set of ideas which run deeply into Averroes's theories of psychology and the relationship between man and the objects which he both encounters and considers.[28] Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* deduces that the material intellect, during the act of intellection, 'must receive forms by a mode of reception other than that by which those matters receive the forms.'[29] Opinions differed within the Averroist tradition regarding the

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[26] On the influence of Albertus on this passage in the *Expositio*, see Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science', pp. 190–191 and 199–200; see also *Expositio*, fols 74^{v}a and 75^{r}b, where Nifo variously associates the axiom with Themistius (as reported by Averroes) and Aristotle; James A. Weisheipl, 'The Axiom *Opus Naturae Est Opus Intelligentiae* and Its Origins', in *Albertus Magnus: Doctor Universalis 1280/1980*, eds Gerbert Meyer and Albert Zimmermann (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1980), pp. 441–463 (455), with my translations of the Latin. On the subtlety of Averroes's own arguments in this regard, see Leaman, *Averroes*, pp. 67–69.

[27] William A. Wallace, 'The Scientific Methodology of Albert the Great', in *Albertus Magnus: Doctor Universalis 1280/1980*, pp. 385–407 (391–393); cf. the discussion by the same author of Nifo's account of the *syllogismus conjecturalis* in *Causality and Scientific Explanation*, I, pp. 142–143.

[28] On intention, see Deborah L. Black, 'Psychology: Soul and Intellect', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 308–326; Ead., 'Imagination and Estimation: Arabic Paradigms and Western Transformations', *Topoi*, 19 (2000), pp. 59–75. See also the discussion of Averroes's account, in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, of 'the existence outside the soul' of the 'universal' in Leaman, *Averroes*, pp. 36–41.

[29] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis* De anima *libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 388; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. Richard C. Taylor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 305. All translations will be from this edition. In his introduction, pp. xliv–xlvi, Taylor explores the connections between Averroes's treatment of intellect and soul as they relate to both the heavens and to man.

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interpretation of intention. In the *Destructio* commentary and other works, Nifo rejects the position of John of Jandun and others that intention is 'received' subjectively during intellection. Rather, Nifo considers that an intention has to be, in some way, a 'perfect and objective' account of the 'form and quiddity' of an object.[30]

It has been argued by Kwame Gyekye, in the context of the Latin translation of the *Destructio,* that the rendering of 'primary' and 'secondary intention' (*prima* and *seconda intentio*) rests on an unhelpful translation from the Arabic of terms better translated in this context in a more general sense as 'primarily' (and by extension, 'secondarily'). However, as Gyekye notes, the choice of *intentio* in the Latin translation served to identify this idea directly with that strand of Arabic philosophy concerned with intention and the processes of intellection.[31] Averroes's statement (in the Latin translation of Nifo's edition) that the 'creator' operates by 'secondary intention' because 'if the primary intention (*prima intentio*) of this movement were for the advantage of the lower world, then the more noble would exist for the advantage of the more base, which is false,' later receives the following gloss from Nifo:

> the gods do not pay attention (*deos curam non habere*) to things in the same way that they fall under their control: and for that reason it follows that the soul of a heaven (*anima celi*) may only ever move for our sake by secondary, not primary, intention.[32]

Whereas Averroes typically conceived the causal relationship between the heavens and the sublunary world to be elusive to human understanding, Nifo's gloss introduces a discussion about whether, or to what extent, the heavens compel human actions, which will be discussed further below. The effect of textual transmission and later interpretation is, therefore, to revise the notions of intentional causality which underpin Averroes's own statement into an argument which ultimately allows for the intermittent but intelligible effect of the heavens on the sublunary world by 'secondary intention'.[33]

Nifo's understanding of the relationship between intention and celestial influence in Averroes is not simply a result of the choice of Latin words and incompleteness of the available translation. The way Nifo discusses Averroes's views on sensation

[30] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 47^{v}b. On the intelligible species and intention in Averroes and Nifo, see Leen Spruit, Species Intelligibilis: *From Perception to Knowledge*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1995), I, pp. 89–95 and II, pp. 71–89.

[31] Kwame Gyekye, 'The Terms "Prima Intentio" and "Secunda Intentio" in Arabic Logic', *Speculum*, 46 (1971), pp. 32–38 (33–34). On Raymond Llull's account of *prima* and *seconda intentio*, also considered to derive from Arab philosophy but distinctively different to that of Nifo, see Gyeke, ibid, pp. 37–38 and Anthony Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull: A User's Guide* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 72–73.

[32] Nifo, *Expositio*, fols 118^{r}a, 119^{r}a; cf. Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Discussion 15, I, p. 295. I have partially adapted Van den Bergh's translation to achieve a more literal rendering of the Latin of Nifo's edition.

[33] There may be a further connection here with the philosophy of Albertus Magnus. On Albertus's reception of the Arabic tradition of intention, see Black, 'Imagination and Estimation', pp. 63–66, and Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis*, I, pp. 139–148. Spruit (ibid, p. 139) describes Albertus's position as 'midway between the spiritualistic psychology of the previous authors and the sense-dependent cognitive psychology of Thomas.'

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in *De sensu agente* suggests that he associated Averroes with a complex series of ideas concerning spiritual and corporeal influence in the fourteenth dispute of his *Destructio* commentary.[34] Rejecting John of Jandun's notion of an internal agent sense, in *De sensu agente* Nifo proposes that sensation entails both a 'physical action and change' (*actio et transmutatio physica*) and a 'spiritual change' (*transmutatio spiritualis*). 'Physical action as much as intentional action (*actio intentionalis*) exists by virtue of the first agent, namely a celestial body.' All sensible things are 'drawn back to the first mover which is the soul of a celestial body.' Nifo goes on to ask how God can be called the 'first changer' (*primus alterans*) or the 'first mover' (*primus movens*) 'when such titles are more conditioned to matter than sense.' His solution is that 'action' (*actio*) is of two kinds: one kind results in an effect which is the same for material and immaterial things, 'at least according to analogy' (*saltem secundum analogiam*). The other is concerned with physical changes. In the former kind, 'the agent can be designated separate from the action' and in this way, God is called, among other things, 'first mover' and 'first loving creator' (*primus amator creator*). He assigns the key principle that 'sensation does not have spiritual being from its subject, but from an external mover' to Averroes.[35] Nifo's argument concerning sensation, therefore, associates two kinds of change (physical and spiritual-intentional) with the action of celestial bodies and then seems to associate the non-physical kind of change with God as the 'first mover'.

Nifo evidently has in mind a famous but controversial passage in Averroes's Long Commentary on the *De anima*, in which Averroes proposes with reference to the act of sensation that 'the external mover in the case of the senses is different from the sensibles.'[36] The manner in which Nifo develops his explanation of the views of Averroes on this subject, however, is evidently influenced both by other works of Averroes and later Latin philosophers. With regard to Nifo's *De sensu agente*, Mahoney has noted the connections between the views which Nifo associates with Averroes in this passage and the *Quodlibeta* of Giles of Rome and, in particular, the *Questio de sensu agente* of Gaetanus of Thiene.[37] With reference to the question

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[34] According to Nifo, *De sensu agente* was finished in 1495, before the completion of the *Destructio* commentary in 1497, but elsewhere Nifo states that he had worked on at least one of the issues in the fourteenth dispute for 4 years (i.e., since approximately 1494), giving overlapping timeframes for the two works. See Nifo, *Expositio*, fols 121ra and 123^{rb} and Agostino Nifo, *De sensu agente*, in Averroes, *Destructiones destructionum*, fol. 129^{rb}.

[35] Nifo, *De sensu agente*, fol. 128ra-^{vb}.

[36] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis* De anima *libros*, ed. Crawford, p. 221; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, ed. Taylor, p. 172.

[37] Giles of Rome, *Quodlibeta* (Bologna: Johann Schreiber, 1481), III, q. 13, sigs g6ra-h2va; Gaetanus of Thiene, *Quaestio de sensu agente* (Vicenza: Enrico di Sant'Orso, 1486), sigs n6ra-n8rb. See Edward P. Mahoney, 'Albert the Great and the Studio Patavino in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays*, ed. James A. Weisheipl (Toronto: Pontifical Institutes of Medieval Studies, 1980), pp. 537–563 (545–546); Id., 'Agostino Nifo's *De Sensu Agente*', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 53 (1971), pp. 119–142; Id., 'Philosophy and Science', pp. 176–179.

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of the influence of celestial bodies, the association of the agent or mover of the spiritual action with an external intelligence is certainly an important point of similarity between the accounts of Nifo and Gaetano. It is Gaetano, not Albertus or Giles, who states clearly that it is an 'intelligence which multiplies its spiritual light not only (*nedum*) to the intellect but indeed also (*immo etiam*) to the interior sense.'[38]

The dualist model of physical and spiritual change, which Nifo associates with Averroes in *De sensu agente* and which deeply informs Nifo's own understanding of celestial influences in the fourteenth dispute of his *Destructio* commentary, is also part of a more general series of such dualisms in the works of Averroes, which recur in the natural philosophy of Albertus Magnus. Beyond the source in Averroes's Long Commentary on the *De anima*, already discussed, the notion recurs in a variety of contexts in the works of Averroes, and in their elaboration by Albertus. For example, in his long commentary on *Physica*, with a cross-reference to his long commentary on the *De anima*, Averroes identifies 'alteration' as able to be both 'corporeal' and 'spiritual'. Albertus, in his *Physica*, repeats this argument, differentiating between 'corporeal' alteration, 'which happens to matter,' and 'spiritual,' which occurs 'when it works through the intention of its form rather than through (its) form.'[39] In his long commentary on the *De coelo*, Averroes explains that it is the movement of celestial bodies which effects the sublunary world and also how, although 'supercelestial bodies' are 'neutral' (*neutra*), 'in as much as they are bodies, they communicate with the elements in their transparency (*diaphaneitas*), illumination (*illuminatio*) and darkness (*obscuritas*).' In the chapter of his *De caelo et mundo* on 'the natural cause of the effects of the stars,' Albertus acknowledges, following Averroes, that the influence of the stars can only be through their movement, and later explains that 'it is said that (the stars) work these forms in two ways, namely through material and corporeal essence (*essentiam*) and through spiritual and intellectual essence.'[40] By explicitly bringing together the question of

[38] Gaetanus of Thiene, *Questio de sensu agente*, fol. n7^{rb}. See also Mahoney, 'Nifo's *De sensu agente*', p. 134. Giles's more equivocal views on the identity of this agent are discussed by Carey J. Leonard, 'A Thirteenth Century Notion of the Agent Intellect: Giles of Rome', *The New Scholasticism*, 37 (1963), pp. 327–358 (341). Albertus declares that 'every form multiplies its intention,' but stops short of the suggestion that this is the work of an intelligence. See Albertus, *De anima*, l. 2 tr. 3 c. 6, in *Opera omnia*, 40 vols, ed. Bernhard Geyer et al. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951-), VII, 1, p. 107b.

[39] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Physica*, VII, t.c. 12, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, fol. 317^{rB-C}; Albertus, *Physica*, l. 7, tr. 1, c. 4, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Münster, IV, II, pp. 525b–526a.

[40] Averroes, Long Commentary on *De coelo et mundo*, II, t.c. 42, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fols 126^{v}M-127^{r}A; Albertus, *De caelo et mundo*, l. 2, tr. 3, c. 5, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Münster, V, 1, pp. 151a and 152b. See also Albertus's account of divination in dreams, where 'heavenly forms, projected towards us, touching our bodies move (them) very forcibly, and impress their virtues', in *De somno et vigilia*, l. 3, tr. 1, c. 9, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Auguste Borgnet, 38 vols (Paris: Vives, 1890–1899), IX, p. 190a. While Thomas Aquinas's views on several subjects discussed in this section differ from those of Albertus and Averroes, Thomas also accepted the principle that the influence of a celestial body could reflect both its corporeality as a body and the spiritual power of its mover in the production of substantial forms. See Thomas Litt, *Les corps célestes dans l'univers de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain; Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1963), p. 180.

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celestial influence with the principles of Averroes's physics of movement – a philosophical sleight of hand which brings intentional or spiritual influences into a context of efficient causality – Albertus establishes a further premise necessary for Nifo's treatment of celestial influences in the fourteenth dispute.

We can therefore say that Nifo's accounts of divine and celestial causality, and of sensation, in the *Destructio* commentary and *De sensu agente* show an approach to the interpretation of Averroes which is crucially mediated by Albertus and other Latin philosophers. Some of the key views concerning celestial influences which Nifo assigns to Averroes in these works are significantly influenced by the writings of these mediators. Rather than emphasising the inscrutability of the heavens to investigation through natural philosophy, the model of the causal relationships between the first mover, the heavens and the sublunary world which Nifo associates with Averroes allows more fully for the possibility of human scrutiny of those relationships. Nifo's Averroist universe is intelligible in ways not envisaged by Averroes himself. Also in the name of Averroes, Nifo builds on Gaetanus of Thiene's account of the agent sense to bring together the notion of divine or celestial intentional influence on the sublunary world with the process of human intellection, thereby further cementing the relationship between celestial causality and intelligibility. As will be explored in the next section, in his dualist model of physical-corporeal and spiritual-intentional transformation derived from ideas of Averroes and Albertus, Nifo found the basis for an attempt to reconcile the thought of Averroes and Aristotle with Neoplatonic, Hermetic and astrological accounts of celestial influence.[41]

The Pars Spiritualis *of Man and the* Motus Intentionalis *of the Heavenly Bodies*

Nifo's second commentary of the first *dubitatio* of the fourteenth dispute occupies nearly nine pages of folio size (fols 118ra-122va). The associated text is Averroes's refutation of the statement of al-Ghazālī that 'the philosophers have affirmed that the heavens are some kind of *animal* which obeys glorious God himself in its movement; for every voluntary movement arises without doubt due to a certain intended thing (*propter quoddam intentum*).[42] Having considered various points in Averroes's text, Nifo's commentary begins to introduce ideas from a range of other sources (fol. 119ra onwards). In the writings of Aristotle and Averroes, he notes positions which suggest

[41] See Troilo's characterisation of Averroism as 'dualist, transcendent (and) not without deep veins of mysticism and theosophy.' (Erminio Troilo, *Averroismo e aristotelismo padovano* [Padua: CEDAM, 1939], p. 40.)

[42] Translated from the textus in Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 117ra: 'dicunt philosophi quod celum est quoddam animal obediens ipsi deo glorioso in suo motu: quilibet motus voluntarius fit sine dubio propter quoddam intentum;' see van Den Bergh's English translation of the Arabic in Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Discussion 15, I, p. 293.

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that the actions of celestial bodies are limited by their own nature. As they cannot change their own natures, it follows that they can only influence changes according to extent and not nature. Similarly, their influence on the sublunary world is associated with generation and corruption.[43] Alongside these views, Nifo makes a series or references to Platonic and Neoplatonic positions which emphasise the divine nature of the heavens. He notes that Plotinus, in response to the assertion of astrologers (*astrologi*) that the stars can alter 'natures through changing their location and aspect,' argues that if earthly things, which are very susceptible to change, can only be changed with respect to their behaviour (*mos*) and location (*locus*), how much less true can this be of 'very stable things, like celestial bodies?'[44]

Nifo now turns to the blend of Peripatetic and providential ideas in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* as an explanation of how 'the [sublunary] world is governed entirely by movements from on high.'[45] Nifo argues that it is sacrilege to discuss the universe without discussing the 'principle of the universe' (*principium mundi*) that 'everything exists due to God and through God.'[46] Accepting the theses he finds in *De mundo*, Nifo poses three further questions, through which he aims to determine the truth about 'how this world is controlled through the movements (*lationes*) from on high.' The following are the questions:

> first, it is necessary to see how many of these movements occur here; secondly, in how many ways a celestial body acts to make them, and what its mode of operation is in respect of us; thirdly, it will be seen by which species of guidance (*gubernatio*) the movers guide us, and how they conduct themselves in the act of guiding.

Nifo answers the first question from the perspective of their effect on man. The influence of these movements 'can,' he explains,

> relate to the spiritual and the corporeal part. For since man is a joining together (*nexus*) of celestial and corruptible things, as Isaac says, it is fitting that he has a two-fold nature: that is, spiritual, by which he joins with the highest things; and corporeal, by which he also unites

[43] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119ra, referring to Averroes, Long Commentary on *De coelo et mundo*, III t.c. 72, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fol. 230^{rE}; *Expositio*, fol. 119^{rb}, references to Averroes, *De generatione et corruptione*, II t.c. 56 and 58, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, V, fols 385^{vH-K}, 386^{rA-D}.

[44] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119^{rab}. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* II, iii, 1, in *Opera omnia*, trans. Marsilio Ficino, eds Georg Friedrich Creuzer and Georg Heinrich Moser (Paris: Didot, 1855), p. 61. Nifo's account draws closely (sometimes verbatim) on the account in Ficino's commentary on Plotinus, see Ficino, *In Plotinum*, in *Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Basel: Heinrich Petri, 1576; facsimile repr., Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1962), II, pp. 1609–1610.

[45] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119va. Nifo may have in mind a particular passage in *De mundo*. See in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VII, fol. 116^{vH-M}. On the *De mundo*, its ideas and later reception see Jill Kraye, 'Aristotle's God and the Authenticity of *De mundo*: An Early Modern Controversy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28 (1990) pp. 339–358 (341–344); repr. in Ead., *Classical Traditions in Renaissance Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), XI. Kraye notes that both Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola cite the *De mundo* as an authoritative source.

[46] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119va. Cf. Aristotle, *De mundo*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VII, fol. 111^{rC-D}.

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with those things which are here. I speak about man since, as Plato says, man in some way is everything, for everything in the world is in him and he is the microcosm (*parvus mundus*).[47]

Nifo defines the influence of these movements 'insofar as they relate to the corporeal part' as 'transmutation in substance' in the form of 'generation' and 'corruption,' and 'transmutation in accident' in the form of 'augmentation,' 'diminution,' and 'alteration from local movement.' Influences on the 'spiritual part' take the form of 'augmentation in knowledge' and its corresponding 'diminution' in the forms of 'prophecy' (*prophetia*), 'belief in any new religion' (*credulitas alicuius nove legis*), 'foresight' (*prudentia*) and 'all operations of the soul which Aristotle lists in his *De anima* and *Ethica*.'[48]

Nifo's association of the 'corporeal' and 'spiritual' duality with Platonic and Neoplatonic sources is striking. The allusion to Plato is most likely a reference to the *Timaeus*.[49] In the reference to Isaac, Nifo seems to have in mind the teachings of the medieval Jewish Neoplatonist Isaac ben Solomon Israeli.[50] A probable source is a passage in Isaac's *De elementis*, which applies a similar disposition to man's soul in its treatment of the distinction between the 'corporeal' and the 'spiritual'. Isaac explains that in certain situations (including dreams), because God wills it, the intellect makes the soul acquire 'spiritual forms and discourses' which are present in the soul. These appear in 'forms intermediary between corporeal and spiritual.'[51] Albertus Magnus, in his *De caelo*, describes Isaac's distinction in this passage as between 'natural' and '*animal* sense.'[52] Although *De elementis* was not printed until 1515, the records of the library of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola suggest that the medieval Latin translation of the original work was available in Nifo's circle.[53]

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[47] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119va. On the use of the term *gubernatio*, cf. Aristotle, *De mundo*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VII, fol. 119^{vG}: 'what the helmsman is in a ship, this God is God is in the universe' ('quod in navi gubernator est … hoc Deus est in mundo').

[48] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119va.

[49] The story of the creation of the universe and of men is found in *Timaeus*, 29d-47e. On man's relationship to the universe, see in particular 44d. On Platonism and Neoplatonism in Nifo, with particular reference to the soul, see Mahoney, 'Agostino Nifo and Neoplatonism', in *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance*, VI, pp. 205–231, and 'Plato and Aristotle in the Thought of Agostino Nifo'.

[50] On Isaac's blend of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, see Alexander Altmann, 'The Philosophy of Isaac Israeli', in *Isaac Israeli: A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century*, eds A. Altmann and Samuel M. Stern (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 149–217, esp. pp. 172–179; Sarah Pessin, 'Jewish Neoplatonism: Being above Being and Divine Emanation in Solomon ibn Gabriol and Isaac Israeli', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed sFrank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 91–110; Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, 'Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Elementis*', in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, eds Jill Kraye, Charles B. Schmitt and W. F. Ryan (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), pp. 63–83.

[51] Isaac ben Solomon Israeli, *Opera* (Lyon: Bartholomaeus Trot, 1515), fols 10^{vb}-11ra.

[52] Albertus Magnus, *De caelo et mundo*, l. 2, tr. 1, c. 4, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Münster, V, 1, p. 110b.

[53] Isaac's *De elementis* was translated into Latin in the twelfth century by Gerard of Cremona. Altmann and Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, p. 133. Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola*, p. 239 (inventory number 893).

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Nifo's intention to accommodate Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and even theological ideas within an expanded model of spiritual and physical 'movements' is confirmed by his subsequent consideration of 'how many ways by their nature the heavens act to make those things which have been enumerated.'[54] He first considers the position of those who say that 'the celestial bodies were made as a universal embellishment, not for the creation or conservation of beings.' The latter view he assigns to the 'law of Mohammed.' The implication of this view, as he points out with reference to 'Rabbi Moyses' (Maimonides), is that 'God works all things without medium (*immediate*) and that 'there are no natural powers (*virtutes*) in anything.'[55] The most contentious example of this thought is creation *ex nihilo*, and Nifo notes the discussion in Book 12 of Averroes's Long Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysica*, where creation *ex nihilo* is discussed as part of 'our religion' (*lex nostra*) and the 'religion of the Christians' (*lex Christianorum*).[56] Averroes, Nifo reports, goes on to note that to rule out the existence of such natural 'powers' denies the proper place to agency in motion: Nifo is aware that, if man no longer moves a stone by pushing it (as is implied in accordance with Aristotelian concepts of agency and potency), but rather the 'agent' actually creates the motion (*illud agens creat motum*), core principles of Aristotelian physics would fail, in particular the potentiality of the object moved.[57] Nifo goes on to cite the views of several who reject the creationist position, most notably those of the medieval Arab astrologer Abū Ma shar (Albumasar) and the late-classical commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, who proposed that the celestial bodies influence the sublunary world by virtue of their natural regular motions.[58] He compares this position with the view of Heraclitus: rather than operating 'according to a kind of reciprocation' (*secundum quandam reciprocationem*), 'sometimes everything becomes fire.'[59]

In this context, Nifo proposes to explain how the influence of the heavens works. He presents an account of 'intentional' and 'physical' movement, taking as his example the magnet,

> which moves locally according to the power (*virtus*) of the heavens. As lapidaries say, if a magnet were brought near to a sphere and located above its two poles, without doubt the sphere is moved locally by the proximate movement of the heavens. And this is because everything which is moved locally, is moved through the power of the first thing moved,

[54] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119va.

[55] Ibid., fol. 119^{vb}. Maimonides's position in the *Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dux perplexorum*), pt 1 c. 68 and 69, is to employ an emanational argument to reconcile God as final cause with the operation of efficient cause in the universe. See *The Guide of the Perplexed*, ed. Shlomo Pines (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 163–167.

[56] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119^{vb}; cf. Averroes, Long Commentary on *Metaphysica*, XII, t. c. 18, Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 304^{rE-F}. Nifo also assigns views in support of various kinds of creation ex nihilo to Homer, Orpheus and the mysteriously titled 'Hermes Enoch Mercurius' in this passage.

[57] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119^{vb}; cf. Averroes, Long Commentary on *Metaphysica* XII, t.c. 18, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, VIII, fol. 305^{vG-H}.

[58] For Alexander's views on providence, see Kraye, 'Aristotle's God', p. 340.

[59] See Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1067a.

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> which is a heavenly body. And after all these things are said, from them we accept that celestial bodies operate in this lower world without doubt according to every kind of movement: intentional and physical *(intentionales et physici)*.[60]

Nifo's account here is distinctively different from Averroes's explanation of the magnet. In the *Physica*, Aristotle had explained that the magnet, like the object thrown or fired, is evidence of a 'continuous' and 'single' motion in all things.[61] Averroes's Long Commentary had expanded on some of the key issues in this passage. With reference to the medium which imparts movement to the object when it no longer has contact with the first mover, Averroes argues that it is as if such bodies 'receive a certain penetration' from the outside. The nature of the medium is therefore 'between spiritual and corporeal being.'[62] Yet, at the close of the same commentary passage, Averroes contrasts the discontinuous nature of such movement in the sublunary world, which is moved by many movers, from the continuous 'movement of the stars.'[63]

Nifo's account expands on the notion of a division between 'physical' and 'intentional' influences, and moves them from the specific context of the medium of movement to the general context of all sublunary movements. The 'physical' kind of motion (*modus motus physicus*) relates to 'generation,' 'corruption,' 'alteration,' 'increase,' 'decrease' and 'change of location.'[64] The 'intentional' kind of motion (*modus motus intentionalis*) occurs when 'knowledge of prophecy, religions, morals (as declared in books concerned with morality), vices and all the acts which universally (*universaliter*) are found in us flow in a holy fashion (*sancte*) into men: as the astrologers (*astrologi*) say.'[65] Nifo's account of the magnet does not echo Averroes's comments concerning the discontinuity of sublunary movement, as contrasted with the continuity of celestial movement. Instead, Nifo emphasises, and makes significant claims for, the transmission of celestial influence into the sublunary world.[66] His notion of spiritual or intentional change is located, alongside the transformation of physical form, within the principles of Aristotelian physics, like Albertus's explanation of the transmission of spiritual essence through the movement of the stars in his *De celo.* Moreover, Nifo's concept of spiritual or intentional change embraces the

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[60] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119^{vb}.

[61] Aristotle, *Physica*, VIII, 267a.

[62] Averroes, Long Commentary on *Physica*, VIII, t. c. 82, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, IV, fol. 430^{vI-K}.

[63] Ibid, fol. 431^{vA}. On discontinuous movement, see Ruth Glasner, *Averroes' Physics: A Turning Point in Medieval Natural Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 125–126.

[64] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119^{vb}. In a later passage, fol. 120^{rb}, Nifo returns to the example of 'a stone moved by a stick which only moves because of the hand which exercises an influence on (*influit*) the stick.' Nifo concludes that in the same way that any 'instrument' (like the stick) moves by virtue of the 'first cause', it is not necessary for the 'instruments of the first bodies (i.e., of the celestial bodies) to be joined in place, but by the action of (their) virtues.'

[65] Ibid, fol. 119^{vb}.

[66] Nifo returns to the idea of the magnet later in the commentary (fol. 120va) to explain the reference to the influence of the heavens on a choleric man.

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transmission of knowledge, prophecy and religion in a form which, his choice of the authorities suggests, is intelligible to those who, like the 'astrologers', understand natural philosophy.[67]

Nifo goes on to apply his emerging model of celestial influences to an even wider range of phenomena. He notes that 'generation' and 'corruption' are the principles by which, in the alchemical views of Albertus and Avicenna, a particular planet 'increases' (*multiplicat*) a particular metal.[68] He notes the alignment of the generation of animals ('when the sun enters the first point of Aries, birds begin to build nests') and of the cycle of human pregnancy (the child born 'in the eighth month' of pregnancy cannot live as it 'rises under a mortifying star') with the annual cycle of the heavens. Although commonplace ideas, they are associated with various authorities, including 'Hermes Egyptius' (Trismegistus) and Ptolemy.[69] Perhaps most interestingly, he next explains that

> Plato says in the *Timaeus* that corporeal life is poured into us by the stars. Moreover, it will be made manifest that celestial bodies cause changes in accidental bodies, that is to say spiritual and corporeal movements. First experience teaches about spiritual change. For Plotinus, in the second book of the *Fourth Ennead*, says that the speaking statues made by workmen do not speak because souls speak in them. Nor do the stars speak; but demons commanded by the star, under the governance of which the art or work was celebrated.[70]

The term 'spiritual change' (*mutatio spiritualis*) reappears again, this time in association with material which draws on the writings of Marsilio Ficino. The summary of the *Timaeus* ('corporeal … stars') is taken directly from a passage in

[67] Albertus uses the example of the magnet as part of his argument concerning the need for an external input to sensation. He rejects the view of Plato that there is some kind of emission from the eyes of a bewitcher towards the eyes of someone bewitched as the same as the suggestion that 'virtue goes out from the magnet to the iron.' See *De anima*, l. 2, tr. 3, c. 6, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Münster, VII, 1, p. 107a. Nifo's use of the magnet image also differs significantly from that of Marsilio Ficino, who uses the magnet as an analogy for the animation of the corporeal universe by the 'souls of the spheres'. See Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, eds and trans. Michael J. B. Allen and James Hankins, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001–2006), I, pp. 282–285.

[68] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 119^{vb}. The theory that individual *species* of metal are associated with individual planets can be found in Albertus Magnus, *Mineralia*, l. 3, tr. 1, c. 6, in *Opera*, ed. Borgnet, V, p. 66b; Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. Dorothy Wyckoff (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 168.

[69] Ibid., fol. 120ra. The full list of authorities cited in this passage is Plato, 'Magot Grecus,' 'Germa Babylonicus,' Hermes Egyptius, Ptolemeus, Geber Hispalensis, Thebit and Zoroaster (their 'head'). With the exception of the reference to Zoroaster and the correction of 'Magot' to 'Magor,' this list coincides precisely with a list of authorities on the aid to be gained from engraving signs (*sigillae*) on gems in Albertus Magnus, *Mineralia*, l. 2 tr. 3 c. 3, in *Opera*, ed. Borgnet, V, p. 51a; Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. Wyckoff, p. 134. On the authorities cited by Albert, several of which are spurious, see Wyckoff's edition, Appendix C, pp. 272–275 and David Pingree, 'The Diffusion of Arabic Magical Texts in Western Europe', in *La diffusione delle scienze islamiche nel Medio Evo europeo*, ed. Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1987), pp. 57–102 (81–84).

[70] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 120^{r}a.

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Ficino's commentary on Plotinus concerning the *Timaeus*.[71] The example of the 'speaking statues' is derived from a passage on the operation of the demons through the statues in the *Fourth Ennead*.[72] This is most famously picked up by Ficino in both Book 3 of *De vita libri tres*, the *De vita coelitus comparanda* (completed in 1489) and, with explicit reference to the views of Plotinus and 'Mercurius' (Hermes Trismegistus), in the closing chapter of his *Theologia Platonica*.[73]

Nifo had already considered the case for the existence of demons in the third dispute of the *Destructio* commentary. There, he concluded that the Peripatetic position, denying the existence of demons, was insufficient to 'put to flight' either the possibility that man can work magic or that the effects are caused by some external agency which has intellect.[74] If, he proceeds to argue, demons are autonomous external agents, a demon must be 'a spirit' (*spiritus*). However, he concludes that the 'best and true position' on the subject must be that of the Christian religion. The fourteenth dispute seems to revive the possibility that phenomena such as the talking statues of Plotinus – which Nifo evidently regards as well-attested – can be accommodated within a philosophical discourse of 'spiritual change' in the sublunary world. While he reserved his more detailed consideration of the nature of demons for other works, it is nonetheless notable that Nifo sought to accommodate them within his wider discussion of spiritual or intentional influences in the fourteenth dispute.[75]

Nifo therefore builds up a range of evidence for the influence on the sublunary world of a set of physical-corporeal and spiritual-intentional forces which are at

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[71] Marsilio Ficino, *In Plotinum*, II, iii, c. 9, in Id., *Opera*, II, p. 1629: 'vitam nobis corpoream a stellis infundi.' On the influence of Ficino on the treatment of the soul in the *Destructio* commentary, see Edward P. Mahoney, 'Marsilio Ficino's influence on Nicoletto Vernia, Agostino Nifo and Marcantonio Zimara', in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone: Studi e documenti*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 1986), II, pp. 509–351 (517–520).

[72] Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV, iii (not ii, as Nifo suggests), 11; Enneads, trans. A. H. Armstrong, 7 vols (Cambridge, MA, and London: Cambridge University Press, 1934), IV, p. 71. Cf. Plotinus, *Opera omnia*, p. 206.

[73] Marsilio Ficino, *De vita libri tres*, III, 20, in Id., *Opera*, I, pp. 560–561; Id., Platonic Theology, VI, pp. 194–195. On Plotinus's statues and Ficino's *De vita*, see Brian Copenhaver, 'Astrology and Magic', in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, pp. 264–300; 274–279. On the question of Ficino and demons, see also D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958; repr. Stroud: Sutton, 2000), esp. pp. 45–53; Michael J. B. Allen, *The Platonism of Marsilio Ficino: A Study of His Phaedrus Commentary, its Sources and Genesis* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 8–23.

[74] Nifo, *Expositio*, dub. xviii, fol. 46va.

[75] Ibid, fol. 46$^{va–b}$; see Zambelli's discussion of this part of the third dispute as a kind of 'double truth' argument in 'Problemi metodologici', esp. pp. 146 and 162–163. Caution needs to be exercised when interpreting 'double truth' arguments, in Averroes and more generally, given the difficulty of determining the intentions of the author. For a balanced view, see Stuart MacClintock, *Perversity and Error: Studies on the 'Averroist' John of Jandun* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956), pp. 98–99. Nifo's other, more extensive, early discussion of demons is the short treatise *De daemonibus*, in his *De intellectu. De daemonibus* (Venice: Petrus de Querengis, 1503), fols 77ra-83^{vb}, which is discussed by Zambelli in 'Problemi metodologici'. A full discussion of Nifo's treatment of demons in the context of Aristotelian natural philosophy, Neoplatonic and other sources in both the *Destructio* commentary and the *De demonibus* lies beyond the scope of this study.

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least partly intelligible, and seem to derive from his understanding of Averroes's natural philosophy. In the closing pages of his discussion, however, Nifo holds a firm and anti-Averroist line concerning the nature of the human soul and man's freedom of choice. First, he identifies two subjects concerning which he has found no certainty among the ancient authors (*antiqui*), especially in the writings of 'Aristotle and the other Peripatetics.' These matters, which his reader will want clarified, are: (1) 'whether wise men are of the opinion that celestial bodies compel our actions or not'; and (2) 'in what way our knowledge may be increased or decreased by reason of the stars.'[76] Next he notes a series of authorities, including Abū Ma shar, Ptolemy, the 'Jews through their cabalistic wisdom,' Iamblichus, Porphyry and Zoroaster, who teach that man can 'avoid the powers of the stars and reject their fate.' With overtones of Albertine or Thomist accounts of astrology, Nifo asks 'what would become of religion, laws, divine decrees and natural order, when freedom of choice (*libertas arbitrii*) is taken away?'[77] Nifo considers a number of Stoic and other positions regarding the extent to which the heavens compel all human actions.[78] In this context, he notes the problem that occurs if Averroes is taken to mean that 'each man's cogitative power (*cogitativa*) is a natural form wholly developed from the potentiality of matter.'[79] However, in a subsequent passage,

[76] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 121ra. For an overview of determinism and causality in Aristotle and subsequent classical philosophical tradition, see Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame*; for considerations in the early modern period, see Antonino Poppi, 'Fate, Fortune, Providence and Human Freedom', in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 641–667.

[77] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 121ra. Nifo could have found the question of the freedom from celestial influence of human choice (*liberum arbitrium*) or human will (*libera voluntas*) discussed in several texts by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, including the same chapter of Albertus's *Mineralia* which he seems to have used elsewhere in this text as a source. In this chapter Albert notes 'in man a two-fold principle of action, namely nature and will … nature is controlled by the stars; but the will is free.' See Albertus Magnus, *Mineralia*, in *Opera*, ed. Borgnet, V, l. 2 tr. 3 c. 3, p. 51b; Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. Wyckoff, p. 135. See also Paola Zambelli, 'Albert le Grand e l'astrologie', *Recherches de thélogie ancienne et médiévale*, 49 (1982), pp. 141–158 (esp. 144); Thomas Aquinas, *L'astrologie. Les opérations cachées de la nature. Les sorts*, trans. and ed. Bruno Couillaud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008), esp. pp. XLIII-XLIV. On the tranlsation of *arbitrium* and *voluntas* in such contexts, see Jerzy B. Korolec, 'Free Will and Free Choice', in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 623–641 (630).

[78] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 121^{r}b. On the Stoic tradition, astrology and determinism, see A. A. Long, 'Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra', in *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenistic Theory and Practice*, eds Jonathan Barnes, Jacques Brunschwig, Myles Burnyeat and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1982), pp. 165–193; for a subtle account of Stoic arguments concerning necessity, see Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame*, ch. 4 (pp. 70–88).

[79] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 121^{v}a. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneas secunda*, l. 3 c. 13, p. 67. On the complex history of the *cogitativa* from Avicenna to Averroes, see Black, 'Imagination and Estimation', esp. pp. 5–6, 13; H. A. Wolfson, 'The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 28 (1935), pp. 69–113; repr. in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, I, pp. 250–314; George P. Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power: Sources and Doctrine of the* vis cogitativa *according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Saint Louis, MO: The Modern Schoolman, 1952).

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he returns to the question of Averroes's view of the intellect and rejects the idea that Averroes's clear division between the immaterial intellect and material soul can reflect the view of Aristotle. A consequence of the infamous notion, associated with Averroes, of the unitary intellect for all men, separated from matter, was to leave the individual soul of each man as something wholly mortal:

> If the opinion of Averroes about the soul of man puts forward the view of Aristotle, I do not see how fortune can be maintained: since then the soul of a man would exist by its nature in a simple manner wholly subordinated to the celestial bodies. Unless it is posited that, for each man, the *cogitativa* and the intellect are put back together as the singular soul of a man (*una hominis anima*), which is the mistress (*domina*) of human actions. For it may be that from these there exists one soul for each man, according to Averroes.[80]

Nifo notes that this alternative theory of the soul allows the views of Aristotle to be reconciled with that of the Church and advances seven arguments in support of the soul as a unification of the intellect and the cogitative power. Nifo also goes on to suggest that Averroes himself might be interpreted as saying that the soul is created from the 'coming together' (*congregatum*) of the cogitative power and the intellect.[81] With regard to celestial influences, this position allows for the influence of the heavens on the intellect to be only *per accidens*, as Plotinus suggested. In his concluding comments, Nifo returns to the concept of the 'secondary intention' of the heavens, and explains it in terms of the provision of heavenly 'signs', which have hidden rather than overt power over the sublunary world:

> The fact that a [celestial] sign (*signum*) tarries above us for such a long time does not prove that it moves us so forcefully by its manifest qualities, but through the occult way that we have explained.[82]

Conclusions: Nifo and Syncretic Currents in Late Fifteenth-Century Philosophy

In the last commentary of his edition, Nifo confirms the truth of Averroes's view that

> the human intellect, clearly lacking in its understanding (*deficit*) of the reasons and causes of natural things, is very greatly lacking in its understanding of these higher and sublime

[80] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 122^{r}a. On the incompatibility of the unitary intellect and freedom of choice, see Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, c. 4, in *Opera omnia*, 50 vols (Rome: Leonine Edition, 1882-), XLIII, p. 308a-b. On Nifo's use of *De unitate intellectus* in his *De intellectu*, see Mahoney, 'Nifo and Thomas Aquinas', pp. 207–208. On the phrase 'a single soul for [each] man' (*una anima totalis hominis*) see Mahoney, 'Philosophy and Science', p. 193.

[81] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 122ra. Averroes's more famous and dangerous notion of a unitary intellect to all men is discussed by Nifo elsewhere in the *Destructio* commentary. See Mahoney, 'Plato and Aristotle', V, p. 82. On the contrast in Nifo's later *De intellectu* (1503) and *Libellus de immortalitate anime* (1518) between the views of Averroes and Ficino on the freedom of the individual soul's will, see Mahoney, 'Ficino's Influence', pp. 522–524.

[82] Nifo, *Expositio*, fols 122ra, 122va. On the operation of the celestial bodies on the soul *per accidens*, see *In Plotinum*, II, l. 3 c. 13, in Ficino, *Opera omnia*, II, p. 1635.

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bodies of which we do not know the quantities and of those substances, the manner of the existence (*esse*) of which is wholly unknown to us.[83]

However, it is evident that, in the preceding pages, Nifo expounded a very different account of a dualist model of physical-corporeal and intentional-spiritual change, drawing on broadly Averroist principles which are crucially mediated by the views of later authorities, in particular Albertus Magnus. This model comes to explain not only physical and formal change in the natural world, but also celestial causes for natural prophecy, knowledge, morality and demonology, as variously described by Neoplatonic, astrological and other authorities.

In his recourse to the example of the magnet, Nifo provides an explanation for these phenomena which he grounds in a language derived from Aristotelian physics. The resulting combination of ideas, it might be suggested, raises serious questions for Nifo's reader. For example, when Nifo advances the principle of man as a microcosm in support of the connection between man and the orderliness of the 'highest things,' he does so without direct reference to the elaborate structures of unity and interdependence which inform Neoplatonic exegesis of the *Timaeus* and other Platonic works. Similarly, when he cites the example of Plotinus's demonic statues as an example of 'spiritual change,' he leaves unanswered the question of the ensouled (i.e., mixed spiritual and corporeal) nature of the Platonic demon. Nevertheless, Nifo consistently attempts to reconcile the mechanics of Aristotelian natural philosophy with some key Neoplatonic notions of universal correspondence. His particular solution reflects a commitment to principles which he describes in other contexts as Averroist, even though the origins of these principles in Averroes's own writings are in fact significantly mediated through the works of Albertus and other earlier philosophers. In Nifo's universe, it may be the condition of man to be deficient in his understanding of celestial causes, but the heavens evidently operate through a causality which is direct, in the sense of being a proximate cause for sublunary changes, and to some degree intelligible, in the sense that it is capable of being understood by man, the *parvus mundus*.[84]

The argument in the fourteenth dispute is also characterised by two other features. First, Nifo is evidently driven by a predisposition to include, rather than dismiss, the *evidence* regarding the nature of the world which is presented by magic and astrology. His line of argument in the third dispute concerning demons is insightful in this regard: the evidence for the existence of demons is not challenged

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[83] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 123^{rb}.

[84] Albertus himself was engaged in a reconciliation of Aristotelian and Platonic ideas. See, for example, Albertus's references to man as *parvus mundus* in the *Physica* and *imago mundi* in the *De somno*: *Physica*, l. 8 tr. 1 c. 9, in *Opera omnia*, ed. Münster, IV.ii, pp. 565b–566a; *De somno*, l. 2 tr. 1 c. 9, in *Opera*, ed. Borgnet, IX, p. 189b. For a discussion of Albertus's combination of 'Arabic Plotinus material' and Peripatetic philosophy, see Thérèse Bonin, 'The Emanative Psychology of Albertus Magnus', *Topoi*, 19 (2000), pp. 45–57, esp. pp. 47–48. On the reconciliation of Platonic and Aristotelian notions concerning the infinite power of God and creation from antiquity to Averroes, see Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, pp. 249–281.

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by the failure to find a proof in philosophy for their existence. In the fourteenth dispute, the 'astrologers' are presented on several occasions as observers providing evidence of the order and intelligibility of the universe. Secondly, the trajectory of the fourteenth dispute is towards the vindication of a unified view of the universe within the structure of natural philosophy. In the sixth dispute, Nifo had presented in a 'double truth' argument the incompatibility of Averroes's views on the natural origins of religions with the Christian faith, observing that Averroes's position must be in error as 'our religion could only be from God.'[85] In the fourteenth dispute, by contrast, Nifo attempts a reconciliation of natural philosophy and religion with reference to the preservation of the key principle of human freedom of choice and the rejection of the Averroist theory of the unity of the intellect for all men. Indeed Nifo goes on to suggest not only that this doctrine did not reflect the mind of Aristotle, but also that it might not have been the true position of Averroes. In other writings, Nifo demonstrates a clear awareness of problems associated with the reconciliation of opposing philosophical positions, notably concerning the existence of demons in the third dispute of the *Destructio* commentary and also *De daemonibus*. By contrast, the fourteenth dispute is best conceived as an exercise in what in modern idiom might be termed 'joined up thinking,' an attempt to harness the potential of a model of physical-corporeal and spiritual-intentional influences which Nifo derived from Averroist natural philosophy in order to reconcile a series of philosophical and theological disagreements. As his last major statement in the commentary, this attempt to bring together so many strands of contemporary thought occupies a privileged position in Nifo's first published volume.

The immediate historical context for the publication of Nifo's commentary also merits further consideration for the relief that it throws on Nifo's commitment to a project dedicated to the synthesis of so many philosophical ideas. By his own account, as a younger man Nifo had known Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), a man who had publicly committed himself to the project of debating not only Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, but also the opinions of 'every school … to the end that the light of truth Plato mentions in his *Epistles* … might dawn more brightly in our minds.'[86] It may therefore be insightful to compare some aspects of Nifo's synthesis of Aristotelian, Averroist, Neoplatonic and Hermetic texts in the fourteenth dispute with the approach adopted by Pico in the

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[85] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 80ra. This and other examples of 'double truth' argument are cited by Zambelli, 'Problemi metodologici', pp. 137–138. Although it is true, as Zambelli suggests in a later work, that the *Destructio* commentary could have been a point of reference for Pomponazzi and others in the exploration of Averroes's ideas concerning the natural status of religions, one should remember the occasions on which Nifo's own instinct in the *Destructio* commentary is already towards reconciliation of theological and philosophical approaches. See Paola Zambelli, *Una reincarnazione di Pico ai tempi di Pomponazzi* (Milan: Il polifilo, 1994), p. 49.

[86] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate*, in Id., *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Turin: Aragno, 2004), p. 142; *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, eds Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 223–254 (244).

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Oratio and *Theses* (presented in 1486). However, the publication of Nifo's *Destructio* commentary also followed closely on the posthumous first publication of the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam* (1496), Pico's attack on the practice of astrology.[87] The extent to which Pico's work demonstrates an evolution of his views on some subjects, in particular magic, and of his methodological approach is a subject for debate among modern scholars.[88] However, in general terms it is possible to compare and contrast some aspects of Nifo's approach to the synthesising of diverse philosophical traditions, as they are displayed in the fourteenth dispute, with that of Pico. While much of Nifo's work is characterised by a desire to reconcile the views of the authorities whom he respects, the fourteenth dispute demonstrates a particular kind of syncretic approach. Aristotelian and particularly Averroist ideas are brought together with material drawn from Neoplatonic and Hermetic sources which were more generally being reconsidered and published in the late fifteenth century in a manner which perhaps revives some of the ambition of Pico's project in the *Oratio* and *Theses*. However, differences are immediately evident. The extent to which Nifo's synthesis remains grounded in the scholastic tradition is evident in his reliance on a single model for celestial influence which is firmly rooted in a form of medieval Averroism that is significantly influenced by Albertus. Nifo's account of celestial influences in the fourteenth dispute repeatedly returns to ideas or interpretations which suggest the influence of Albertus Magnus on his work. While Pico was evidently interested in scholasticism, including the writings of Albertus Magnus, his syncretism was founded on other, more directly classical, Neoplatonic principles. Nifo's account in the fourteenth dispute is ultimately an attempt to marshall essentially disparate philosophical positions within a single model for celestial influence evolved from the writings of Averroes, whereas Pico looked to reconcile different philosophical positions by demonstrating their reference to, in Farmer's words, 'different *levels* of reality.'[89] If Nifo was

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Translation from this edition. Nifo mentions Pico in connection with Platonic theories of the human soul in the *Destructio* commentary, fol. 9va. Edward P. Mahoney, 'Plato, Pico, and Albert the Great: The Testimony and Evaluation of Agostino Nifo', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, 2 (1992), pp. 165–192, discusses this passage at length and identifies Albertus Magnus as a source for the views expressed by Nifo to be those of Pico. On the influence of Pico on Nifo, see also Mahoney, 'Nifo and Neoplatonism', VI, p. 222; 'Pico, Elia, Vernia and Nifo', pp. 143–156.

[87] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, ed. and trans. Eugenio Garin, 2 vols (Florence: Vallecchi, 1946–1952; repr. Turin: Aragno, 2004).

[88] Among recent studies, Stephen Alan Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486): The Evolution of Traditional, Religious, and Philosophical Systems* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1998), presents an account of both Pico's syncretic strategies in the *Oratio* and *Theses*, and of the modern debates surrounding the *Disputationes*; Anthony Grafton, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Trials and Triumphs of an Omnivore', in Id., *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 93–134, makes a strong case for the particular importance of the humanist approach to the historicity of sources adopted by Pico in the *Disputationes*.

[89] See the discussion of the basis in post-Plotinian Neoplatonism of Pico's syncretism in Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, pp. 18–28.

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influenced by the syncretism of Pico's work, his own syncretic account of celestial influences in the fourteenth dispute remains more fundamentally scholastic in its structures.[90]

When Pico's *Disputationes* in particular are considered, a contrast of outlook between Pico and Nifo is also evident. Nifo's later development as a reforming astrologer has already been traced by Zambelli in relation to Pico's *Disputationes* and his contact, after leaving Padua in 1499, with Pontano.[91] The *Destructio* commentary shows Nifo, before his departure from Padua and the publication of his works on the reform of astrology, mounting a qualified defence of the place of astrology within a broadly scholastic natural philosophy, the origins of which have already been discussed. Although the precise intention of Pico's criticism of astrology in the *Disputationes*, and its connection with his earlier work, remain a subject for discussion among modern commentators, significant differences of outlook between the fourteenth dispute and Pico's nearly contemporary work are apparent. While Nifo's account is selective in its support of the claims of astrologers, his syncretic combination of natural philosophy, astrology and Hermetic wisdom runs counter both to Pico's rigorous account in the *Disputationes* of the unsound basis of much astrological prediction and his challenging of the historical basis for the *prisci theologi*. By contrast to Pico's rigour, Nifo accepts the validity of not only an array of ancient wisdom but also, as part of his larger argument about physical-corporeal and spiritual-intentional influences, that astrology itself provides evidence that the influence of the heavens on the sublunary world is intelligible by man.[92] This is perfectly illustrated by a passage towards the end of the long digression in the fourteenth dispute. With reference to the model of causality set out in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis*, Nifo notes that

> the mover of a heaven has regard for the effects which it produces in the manner that it coincides with them … the heavenly body is constituted from a mover and thing moved just as from a craftsman and his instrument. It should be clear how also this connection is one agent of these things below, causing various things according to diverse aspects, conjunctions, *triplicitates*, *dignitates*, and the like, which are shown by the astrologers.[93]

In her significant study of Nifo's demonology, Paola Zambelli characterised Nifo's syntheses of classical and Arabic sources in the third dispute of the *Destructio* commentary and in *De daemonibus* as ultimately flawed attempts to avoid the

[90] On Nifo's work as an example of 'eclectic Aristotelianism' in the Renaissance, see Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 89–109, esp. pp. 98–103.

[91] The connections between Nifo and Pico in relation to magic, and Nifo's reaction in his post-1499 works on astrology to the *Disputationes* are discussed by Zambelli, 'Problemi metodologici', p. 130; *Una reincarnazione*, p. 48; *L'ambigua natura*, pp. 240–241; 'Fine del mondo', pp. 352–356.

[92] See, for example, Pico, *Disputationes*, ed. Garin, I, pp. 100–106 and II, pp. 472–84 (2.1, and 11.2); see also Grafton, 'Trials and Triumphs', esp. pp. 117–118; on the *Disputationes* and the continuity of argument in this regard with Pico's earlier works, see the discussion and extracts (from *Disputationes* 3.24 and 3.25) in Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, pp. 139–149.

[93] Nifo, *Expositio*, fol. 122^{rb}.

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threats of the inquisitors.[94] The *Destructio* commentary is also well-known for its presentation in 'double truth' arguments of points of conflict between Christian and philosophical positions, which, it has been proposed, may have acted as a stimulus to the young Pietro Pomponazzi.[95] The fourteenth dispute, however, shows a different aspect to Nifo's early work. It is a sustained attempt to unite his interests in Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, in astrology, and in demonology within a unified philosophical argument. The result is a combination of a broadly Christian view of the human soul with an account of the operation of celestial influences which Nifo derived from Averroes and other sources. In the scope of its attempt to bring together conflicting positions into a unified argument based in natural philosophy, it offers an insight into the ambition of its author, something which is rarely seen as clearly in his later works.

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[94] Zambelli, 'Problemi metodologici', esp. pp. 164 and 171.

[95] Zambelli, *Una reincarnazione*, p. 49.

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Chapter 7
Intellectual Beatitude in the Averroist Tradition: The Case of Agostino Nifo

Leen Spruit

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In a passage of the third book of *De anima*, traditionally known as text 36, Aristotle tantalised his readers with the promise: 'The question of whether or not the intellect can, when not itself separate from [spatial] magnitude, think anything that is separate should be considered later.'[1] This passage suggests the possibility of incorporeal beings as objects of thought, that is to say, of the human intellect thinking incorporeal beings by taking hold of their form. Arabic philosophers, and particularly Averroes, maintained that the ultimate goal of our life consisted in the knowledge of the separate substances through conjunction with those intelligences. The idea of an intellectual beatitude rapidly spread in the Latin West, but was not always formulated in terms of a conjunction with the separate substances.[2] The first Renaissance author to formulate an extensive and explicit defence of the Averroistic view of intellectual beatitude was probably Agostino Nifo. Here, I present a close reading of Averroes's exegesis of the above-mentioned passage,[3] and a brief analysis of its echoes in the Latin West. Then, Nifo's doctrine of intellectual beatitude in book VI of *De intellectu* (1503) is outlined.

[1] Aristotle, *De anima*, III.7, 431b 17–19.

[2] However, an interesting case is that of Thomas Aquinas, who in his comment on *IV Sent.* accepts the Arabic teachings on knowing the separate substances as a model for the knowledge of God face-to-face. See below note @@.

[3] For a discussion of intellectual happiness in commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Georg Wieland, 'The Perfection of Man: On the Cause, Mutability, and Permanence of Human Happiness in 13th Century Commentaries on the *Ethica nicomachea* (EN)', in *Il commento filosofico nell'Occidente latino (secoli XIII–XV)*, eds Gianfranco Fioravanti, Claudio Leonardi and Stefano Perfetti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 359–377.

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Happiness and the Knowledge of Separate Substances in Averroes

Averroes tackles the issue of conjunction[4] with the agent intellect and the knowledge of the separate substances in several works. His most extensive treatment of the issue is in his *De anima* commentary, book III, text 36.[5] In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, he argues that if it were impossible for the (human) intellect to know separate substances, nature would have acted in vain having produced beings that by their very nature are intelligible and yet are not known.[6] In the treatise *De animae beatitudine*, at least in the versions that circulated in the West since the Middle Ages,[7] Averroes presents the beatitude of the soul as an ascent to the separate intellects, evolving in the frame of a larger hierarchy, which extends from God through the second causes (intelligences), the agent intellect, the soul, to form and matter. However, this work is also devoted to other topics and does not offer any fundamentally new insights for the issue under scrutiny. Therefore, I shall concentrate on the analysis in the Long Commentary.

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[4] The term is also used for the relationship between individual human beings and the material intellect, and for that between the material intellect and the intentions of the imagination. See Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), III, t/c 4–5, pp. 383–413. Besides *continuatio* and *coniunctio* Averroes also used the term *adeptio*, which al-Fārābī used in the context of an emanationist view of reality (which Averroes rejected), as a synonym of the two other terms. See Jean-Baptiste Brenet, 'Perfection de la philosophie ou philosophe parfait? Jean de Jandun lecteur d'Averroès', *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 68 (2001), pp. 310–348 (pp. 313–314, note 12).

[5] Other treatments are in an appendix later added to the Madrid manuscript of Averroes's early *Epitome on De anima*, and in another early work which survives only in Hebrew. For the problem of conjunction in Islamic philosophy and further references, see Deborah H. Black, 'Conjunction and the Identity of Knower and Known in Averroes', *American Catholic Philosophical Society*, 73 (1999), pp. 161–184 (pp. 161, note 2, 164–166, and 180–181, note 47). See also Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 321–340; Alfred L. Ivry, 'Averroes on Intellection and Conjunction', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 86 (1966), pp. 76–85.

[6] Aristoteles, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562 [first edition 1550–1552]; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1962), VIII, I, cap. 1: 'Sed hoc non demonstrat res abstractas intelligere esse impossibile nobis, sicut inspicere solem est impossibile vespertilioni, quia si ita esset, otiose egisset natura.'

[7] This work which survives under the name of Averroes is in fact a compilation based on two letters on the conjunction with the agent intellect; it puts forth a doctrine inspired by the work of Al-Farabi. Both letters survive in Hebrew and were translated in Latin at the end of the thirteenth century in Italy. It was rediscovered by Alessandro Achillini, who published a revised version, later used by Nifo while preparing his own edition. For a thorough analysis of the origin and versions of this work, see Averroes, *La béatitude de l'âme*, eds and trans. Marc Geoffroy and Carlos Steel (Paris: Vrin, 2001).

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In his commentary on text 36 of book III, Averroes begins by dividing the issue into two further questions, that is, (1) whether the intellect knows abstract entities, and (2) whether the intellect, when linked to the human body, is able to know abstract entities, taking for granted that it is able to do so when it exists 'on its own'. According to Averroes, Themistius merely addresses the latter issue, while he intends to discuss both, defining this scrutiny as 'valde difficilis et ambigua'.[8] As to the first point, he raises the issue that if the intellect is viewed as corruptible, it cannot have any knowledge of abstract being. Indeed, Alexander holds that the intellect that knows the separate contents is neither the material intellect, nor the habitual intellect, but the 'intellectus adeptus', which is here implicitly assimilated to the 'intellectus ab extrinseco'. However, this merely presents a different perspective on the same issue, since one may now wonder how this separate intellect relates to man. These problems explain, according to Averroes, the contradictions between Alexander's *De anima* and his treatise *De intellectu*,[9] as in this latter work he states that the material intellect, when it has completed its knowledge of the sensible world, may know the agent intellect.

Averroes formulates a first assessment of Alexander's position, suggesting a solution to the questions under scrutiny: when the material intellect knows all material forms, the agent intellect becomes its form and through a 'continuatio' with this separate substance the material intellect may know 'other', that is, abstract entities and thus become 'intellectus adeptus'.[10] However, this position also does not explain how the corruptible (material) intellect receives as its form the eternal (agent) intellect. Averroes points out similar contradictions in the works of Alexander's Arabic followers, that is to say al-Fārābī[11] and Ibn Bājja (Lat. Avempace).[12] Therefore, he proposes an alternative which might settle the issue: the material intellect is connected to us through the forms of the imagination, while this very same intellect is connected to the agent intellect 'in another fashion'.[13]

Subsequently, Averroes makes a new start recalling that the source of all ambiguity lays in the fact that Aristotle never examined the matter thoroughly in any of his works. After a brief overview of Ibn Bājja's relevant works, Averroes begins by analysing the position of Themistius who argued that the human intellect's knowledge of material forms simply grounds leads to its capacity of knowing abstract entities, as the latter are characterised by a higher kind of intelligibility and thus far more easy to grasp. Yet, so Averroes rebukes, this argument does not hold when the

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[8] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, pp. 480–481.

[9] See Bernardo Bazàn, 'L'authenticité du *De intellectu* attribué à Alexandre d'Aphrodise', *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 71 (1973), pp. 468–487.

[10] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, pp. 481–484.

[11] Elsewhere in his Long Commentary, Averroes criticised al-Fārābī for not admitting the knowledge of separate substances. See Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, p. 433.

[12] Averroes cites his *On the Conjunction of the Intellect with Man*; for an edition of the Arabic text, see Ibn Bājja, *Opera metaphysica*, ed. Majid Fahri (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1968), pp. 155–173.

[13] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, pp. 484–486.

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human intellect is considered a 'virtus in corpore', but only when it is viewed as immaterial. He then raises a further issue: why does the knowledge of separate substances need a period of intellectual growth, and occurs only at an older age? For Alexander such a process is easily explained, since a 'complementum in generatione' is typical for all natural beings. This leads to yet another difficulty, however: why should the knowledge of separate substances be a *complementum actionis* for the human intellect? In this Averroes once again challenges the fuzzy relationship between material, habitual and agent intellects, which compromises the knowledge of eternal beings by a material entity.[14]

Averroes now returns to the position of Ibn Bājja, who – quite enigmatically, at least in the Latin version of Averroes's exposition – held that the 'intellecta speculativa sunt facta,' that 'omne factum habet quiditatem', and finally that 'omne habens quiditatem, intellectus innatus est extrahere illam quiditatem'. This causal connection allows the human intellect to extract the form of the (separate) intellects and their quiddities. After a brief reference to al-Fārābī, Averroes explains that, according to Ibn Bājja, this process of abstracting quiddities cannot go on indefinitely, but that it necessarily stops at contents without any quiddity at all, that is, those which coincide with their own quiddity: 'intellectus perveniat ad quiditatem non habentem quiditatem; et quod tale est forma abstracta.' In a similar vein, al-Fārābī held that no infinite series of abstract entities exists between the habitual intellect and the agent intellect, but only the acquired intellect.[15] Averroes notes that this kind of argumentation only holds if a univocity between the quiddities of material and immaterial beings is given. However, even if the univocity were to be accepted, this view fails to explain how a corruptible intellect may grasp immaterial beings. Furthermore, granted that the material intellect knows abstract entities, why is this kind of knowledge not a 'regular' part of the speculative sciences? Indeed, Ibn Bājja wavered as he distinguished between natural and supernatural powers in his *Epistola expeditionis*, while in his *Epistola continuationis* he clearly ascribed the knowledge of separate substances to the speculative sciences. And yet, why do only very few human beings arrive at this kind of knowledge: is it due to ignorance or to a lack of experience, that is, to a 'diminution of our nature'? The latter answer suggests that man is said equivocally, while the former entails that the speculative sciences are not perfect.[16]

At this point, Averroes introduces his own solution based on the distinction of two intellectual operations, namely a passive one (*intelligere*) and an active one (extracting forms from matter) which precedes the passive one. A similar distinction probably pushed Themistius to view the habitual intellect as composed of material and agent intellect, and equally Alexander to view the acquired intellect as composed of agent and habitual intellect. Averroes then states that intellection may be either natural, i.e., derived from first propositions, or voluntary, that is, consisting of acquired cognitive contents. In both cases, the *intellecta speculativa* are the product

[14] Ibid., pp. 486–490.

[15] Ibid., pp. 490–493.

[16] Ibid., pp. 493–495.

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of an 'actio facta ex congregato', and therefore in this action a form and a matter can be distinguished. The notions of form and matter are not to be viewed as similar to those of natural processes: they qualify the proportion or disposition of the entities involved.[17]

Thus, a serial construction of couples of matter and form are pointed out: (a) the link between the imaginative forms and the agent intellect in the generation of *intellecta speculativa* representing the material world; (b) the connection of the habitual intellect (which consists of *intellecta speculativa*, that is, the cognitive contents of the sensible world) and the agent intellect in the generation of *intellecta speculativa* representing abstract entities. In Averroes's view, the objection that corruptible entities cannot grasp abstract entities does not affect this construction because (1) he views the material intellect as eternal and separate, and (2) he considers the habitual intellect as corruptible only in a certain respect.

Averroes holds that all sorts of connections between superior and inferior entities are characterised by the form-matter relationship. Thus, the agent intellect may become the form of the *intellecta speculativa* derived from sensible knowledge, and through this conjunction the human being acquires knowledge of separate substances and becomes similar to God.[18] It should be borne in mind that in this construction the *continuatio* or *copulatio* causes the intellection, and not the other way round. Indeed, that the agent intellect is both efficient and formal cause of the material intellect does not entail two chronologically distinct acts. The possibility of conjunction exists from the outset, but needs to be actualised.[19] As a matter of fact, Averroes also uses the term 'conjunction' to qualify the identification of subject and object at every stage of perception and cognition. The agent intellect is always in the process of becoming our form, precisely insofar as it enters into our cognitive identification with other things. Thus conjunction, it would seem, is treated by Averroes as a special cognitive act in which the separate substance closest to us, the agent intellect, is known by us as the culmination of our philosophical learning, and through it we are able to know the other separate substances. However, conjunction cannot be a search for cognitive identification with the agent intellect, for the agent intellect is never an object of our knowledge in itself, but rather is part of the very fabric of all our intelligibles.[20] In this way, two earlier issues can be solved. The knowledge of eternal entities through a 'new' intellection can be explained on the basis of the distinction between potential and actual knowledge, and the fact that the knowledge of abstract entities takes place in time ('non in principio, sed postremo') is due to the fact that the speculative sciences need to be developed.[21]

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[17] Ibid., pp. 496–497.

[18] Ibid., pp. 497–500.

[19] Ibid., pp. 485 and 489.

[20] Black, 'Conjunction and the Identity of Knower and Known in Averroes', p. 182.

[21] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, p. 501. For further discussion of the texts and issues analyzed in this section, see Averroes of Cordoba, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, eds. R.C. Taylor and Th.-A. Druart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), in particular pp. LXIX–LXXVI.

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Medieval Developments: From Thomas Aquinas to John of Jandun

From the thirteenth century on, the notion of intellectual beatitude spread rapidly in Western philosophy since the thirteenth century, but not all authors subscribing to this Aristotelian view endorsed the doctrine of the intellect's conjunction to separate substances after a full actualization of the possible intellect.[22] Some authors, such as Boethius of Dacia in his *De summo bono*, simply did not address the question.[23] Remarkably, Albertus Magnus qualified the issue of the possible knowledge of separate substances as the most important of all questions concerning the soul,[24] and in his solution to the problem comes very close to Averroes's position.[25] The way he describes supreme happiness as residing in contemplation is surprisingly similar to the position that would be defended some 10 years later by some philosophers in the Faculty of Arts in Paris and condemned as dangerous Averroism.[26] Also Siger of

[22] Recently, a controversy has sparked over how to interpret the conjunction among medievalist scholars, in particular Luca Bianchi and Alain de Libera. For a discussion, see Maria Bettetini, 'Introduzione: La fecilità nel Medioevo', in *La felicità nel Medioevo*, eds Maria Bettetini and Francesco D. Paparella (Louvain-la-Neuve: Féderation Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2005), pp. VIII–X.

[23] Boethius of Dacia, *De summo bono*, in Boethius of Dacia, *Opuscula,* ed. Niels J. Green-Pedersen (Copenhagen: Gad, 1976), pp. 369–377.

[24] Albertus Magnus, *De anima*, ed. Clemens Stroick, in *Opera omnia*, 40 vols, eds Bernhard Geyer et al. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951-), vol. VII.1, tract. 3, cap. 6, p. 215.

[25] Albert keeps some distance from Averroes, but only insofar as his position seems not to be supported by Aristotle's texts. Cf. Albertus Magnus, *De anima*, tract. 3, cap. 11, p. 221. For a discussion, see Carlos Steel, 'Medieval Philosophy: An Impossible Project? Thomas Aquinas and the "Averroistic" Ideal of Happiness', in *Was ist Philosophie in Mittelalter?*, eds Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1998), pp. 152–174 (159).

[26] Albertus Magnus, *De anima*, tract. 3, cap. 12, pp. 224–225: 'Et ideo etiam in dubium venit, sicut SUPRA diximus, utrum intellectus, secundum quod est in nobis coniunctus imaginationi et sensui, posset aliquid separatum intelligere; intellectus enim post mortem constat, quod intelligit separata. Et nos diximus in illa quaestione, quod nobis videbatur, quoniam nobis videtur, quod in hac vita continuatur cum agente formaliter, et tunc per agentem intelligit separata, quia aliter felicitas contemplativa non attingeretur ab homine in hac vita; et hoc est contra omnes PERIPATETICOS, qui dicunt, quod fiducia contemplantium est ut formam attingere intellectum agentem. Est enim, sicut SUPRA diximus, triplex status nostri intellectus, scilicet in potentia et in profectione potentiae ad actum et in adeptione. In potentia autem existens nullo modo attingit agentem sicut formam, sed dum proficit, tunc movetur ad coniunctionem cum adepto, et tunc, quantum habet de intellectis, tantum est coniunctus, et quantum caret eis, tantum est non coniunctus. Habitis autem omnibus intelligibilibus in toto est coniunctus et tunc vocatur adeptus. Et sic sunt differentiae intellectus nostri quattuor: Quorum primus est possibilis vocatus intellectus, secundus autem universaliter agens et tertius speculativus et quartus adeptus. Accessus autem ex naturae aptitudine ad adeptum vocatur subtilitas, et expeditus usus adepti in actu vocatur sollertia; subtilitas autem causatur ex splendore intelligentiae super possibilem ex natura; sollertia autem est bona dispositio velociter inveniendi multas causas.' Cf. *Super Ethica*, in *Opera*, XIV.2, pp. 774–75.

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Brabant, as far as Nifo's testimony can be trusted,[27] endorsed the thesis of direct knowledge of separate substances and eventually of God.[28] In contrast, this view was refuted by Thomas Aquinas, who accepted the Arabic conception of knowing the separate substances as a model for the vison of God in his commentary on the Sentences,[29] but challenged the foundations of philosophical happiness in his *Summa contra Gentiles*: all human knowledge 'in this state' is sense-bound, and thus our grasp of the realm of insensible, immaterial reality remains imperfect, as it is based on inference.[30] In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Aquinas rejects Averroes's view that nature would have acted in vain if the human intellect could not reach knowledge of the separate substances. First, separate substances are not designed to be known by our intellect. Second, though we may not know them, they are known by other intellects.[31] Then, in 1277 Averroes's view was condemned by Etienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris.[32] Nonetheless, the doctrine remained a topic of discussion and, in some cases, expanded upon by other authors, among whom Thomas Wylton,[33] Duns Scotus,[34] John of Jandun, Rudolph Brito,[35] Ferrandus of Spain,[36]

[27] See Agostino Nifo, *De intellectu*, ed. Leen Spruit (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 'Introduction', pp. 18–24.

[28] See Agostino Nifo, *De intellectu libri sex. Eiusdem de demonibus libri tres* (Venice: Girolamo Scoto, 1554), book VI, ch. 12; for a discussion, see Carlos Steel, 'Siger of Brabant versus Thomas Aquinas on the Possibility of Knowing the Separate Substances', in *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts*, eds Jan A. Aertsen, Kent Emery, Jr., and Andreas Speer (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2001), pp. 211–232.

[29] Thomas Aquinas, *In IV. Sent*., dist. 49, q. 2, a. 1. For discussion, see Jan-Baptiste Brenet, 'S'unir à l'intellect, voir Dieu: Averroès et la doctrine de la jonction au cœur du Thomisme', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 21 (2011), pp. 215–247.

[30] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, chs. 26–45, in particular chs. 41–45. See also Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, eds Marie-Raymond Cathala and Raimondo M. Spiazzi (Turin: Marietti, 1964), lectio 1, n. 285. For Aquinas on highest happiness in this life, cf. *In Eth. Nic*., X, lectio 13; cf. I, lectio 10.

[31] Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, II, lectio 1, n. 286, p. 82. For additional arguments from other works and for discussion of Thomas's position, see Steel, 'Medieval Philosophy: An Impossible Project?', pp. 159–160.

[32] See theses 40, 154, 157, and 176.

[33] See Thomas Wilton, *Quaestio disputata de anima intellectiva*, ed. Władysław Senko, in *Studia Mediewistyczne*, 5 (1964), pp. 5–190 (pp. 86–87).

[34] John Duns Scotus, *Questiones super Metaphysicam*, II, q. 3: 'Utrum substantiae immateriales possint intelligi a nobis secundum suas qualitates pro hoc statu?,' in *Opera omnia*, a Patribus Franciscanis de observantia accurate recognita, 26 vols (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1891–1895; repr. Westmead, Franborough, and Hants: Gregg International Publishers, 1969), VII, pp. 110–115.

[35] Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones in Aristotelis librum tertium De anima*, in Winfried Fauser, *Der Kommentar des Radulphus Brito zur Buch III De anima* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), pp. 276–292.

[36] Ferrandus Hyspanus, *De species intelligibili*, ed. Zdzisław Kuksewicz, *Medioevo*, 3 (1997), pp. 187–235 (225). See Steel, 'Medieval Philosophy: An Impossible Project?', pp. 168–169.

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Henry Bate,[37] and James of Pistoia.[38] For present purposes, we will focus on Jandun's position, which is of particular interest.[39]

Jandun addresses the issue in his commentaries on *De anima* and *Metaphysics*.[40] In his commentary on text 36 in book III of *De anima*, he initially discusses the views of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Ibn Bājja, Averroes, and Thomas Aquinas, and then, he goes on to point out some difficulties. (1) How can the agent intellect become the form of the possible intellect? Either, it is already a form and thus, it cannot change (i.e., become the form of another entity), or it is a subsisting substance and thus, it cannot become the form of another substance (the possible intellect). (2) If some of the intelligible objects are known and others are not, then the agent intellect is only partially the form of the possible intellect, which is to say the least a problematic view. (3) Happiness should be available to all humans, while philosophical beatitude apparently is not. (4) The status of the *intellecta operabilia* and of practical philosophy is uncertain. (5) Knowledge of separate substances seems out of reach for our inferior, human intellect.[41] These objections are all answered and solved. (ad 1–2) The conjunction of agent and possible intellect is to be viewed as 'new' only insofar as (actual) knowledge is concerned. (ad 3) Nothing in human nature is opposed to intellectual beatitude. (ad 4) The objects of speculative cognition pertain to the perfection of the possible intellect, rather than to the practical intellect. (ad 5) Aquinas's arguments do not hold.[42]

In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Jandun formulates other objections: (a) our intellect only knows what the agent intellect abstracts, while the separate substances are abstract entities *per se*; (b) infinite being transcends the finite; (c) our intellect relates to the separate substances as a blind man does to colours; (d) our intellect does not know what is not permitted to be known (God and separate substances).[43] Yet, (ad a) Aristotle discussed the separate substances in book 12 of the *Metaphysics*, (ad b-c) Averroes referred to difficulties to realise this kind of knowledge, not to its impossibility; (ad d) a natural desire cannot be in vain. Following

[37] For discussion, see Steel, 'Medieval Philosophy: An Impossible Project?', pp. 161–167; Steel, 'Siger of Brabant versus Thomas Aquinas', pp. 226–227.

[38] See Iacobus de Pistorio, *Quaestio de felicitate*, ed. Irene Zavattero, in *La felicità nel medioevo*, pp. 395–409.

[39] Some scholars argue that also Siger opposed Thomas in some of his 'lost' works, referred to by Agostino Nifo and reconstructed by Bruno Nardi. For discussion of this issue, see below and the introduction to my edition of Nifo's *De intellectu*, pp. 18–20.

[40] Among the recent studies on Jandun, in particular as to his relation with Averroes, see Brenet, 'Perfection de la philosophie ou philosophe parfait?' and id., *Transferts du sujet: La noétique d'Averroès selon Jean de Jandun* (Paris: Vrin, 2003), pp. 371–432, for the view of intellectual beatitude.

[41] See John of Jandun, *Super libros de anima subtilissimae quaestiones* (Venice: Heirs of Girolamo Scoto, 1587; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1966), col. 419.

[42] Jandun, *Super libros De anima*, cols 420–424.

[43] John of Jandun, *In duodecim libros metaphysicae* (Veice: Girolamo Scoto, 1553; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1966), fol. 22^{v}.

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this, Jandun returns to the views of the Greek, Arab and Latin masters, and concludes that by means of the acquisition of the agent intellect, the possible intellect is disposed to ascend to knowledge of all separate substances, until it arrives at the intuitive knowledge of God's essence through the 'acquisition' of the agent intellect.[44] Jandun explains that at the beginning the agent intellect is united to the possible intellect only as the efficient cause of the intelligibles in it, but at the end, after the agent intellect has abstracted and 'filled' the possible intellect with all the intelligible species of material things,[45] it is united to it as its form.[46] The possible intellect thus becomes *intellectus adeptus*, knows through the agent intellect God and the other separate substances, and thereby attains its supreme state. Human happiness consists dispositionally in the acquisition of the agent intellect, but formally in the act of wisdom whereby we know God directly and are conformed to him.[47]

Agostino Nifo on Intellectual Beatitude in De Intellectu

Nifo discusses the issue of human happiness in two of his early works: in book 6 of his treatise *De intellectu* and in his commentary on *De animae beatitudine*, a work then attributed to Averroes. These works were based on courses completed in 1492, but their publication came later and only after considerable reworking and self-censorship in an anti-Averroistic sense. *De intellectu* was published in 1503, the edition of and commentary on *De animae beatitudine* in 1508.[48] Remarkably, in his analysis and view of beatitude Nifo substantially endorses the Averroist position, and his commentary on *De animae beatitudine* contains only some minor pious corrections.

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Some preliminary remarks are due. First, the issue of the 'state of the soul' (i.e., human beatitude) concerns several fields of the Aristotelian edifice of learning, namely, psychology, metaphysics, cosmology and ethics, and as a result requires a comparative analysis of several works, chiefly *De anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics*,

[44] Jandun, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicae*, fols 24^{rv}, 25^{v}: 'Dicendum quod de Deo potest haberi duplex cognitio, una complexa alia simplex et intuitiva. Modo verum est de cognitione Dei complexa qua cognoscitur quod Deus est actus purus et substantia simpliciter, et sic de aliis, illa procedit ab habitu sapientiae. Sed cognitio simplex intuitiva qua cognoscitur Deus et alia principia abstracta quo ad quidditatem eius, illa bene habetur per adeptionem intellectus agentis, et sic intellexit Commentator.' Cf. Jandun, *Super libros De anima*, III, q. 36, cols 421–24. For the problematic aspects of individual beatitude, see Brenet, 'Perfection de la philosophie ou philosophe parfait?', pp. 344–348.

[45] For discussion of Jandun's view of intelligible species, see Leen Spruit, Species Intelligibilis *from Perception to Knowledge*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1994–1995), I, pp. 328–337.

[46] Cf. Jandun, *Super libros De anima*, III, q. 36, cols 416, 418–420.

[47] Jandun, *In Duodecim Libros Metaphysicae*, I, q. 1, fols ^{ra}-2ra; cf. XII, q. 4, fol. 130ra. For discussion, see Edward P. Mahoney, 'John of Jandun and Agostino Nifo on Human Felicity', in *L'homme et son univers au Moyen Âge*, ed. Christian Wenin (Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1986), pp. 465–477 (pp. 467–468).

[48] For this compilation, see note @@ above.

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De caelo, and *Metaphysics*. Nifo also drew on a vast number of other sources, discussing a broad range of theories and quoting countless writers, including ancient and biblical literature, Greek and Arabic philosophy, and medieval as well as contemporary, late fifteenth-century thought. Although his main interlocutors were Themistius, Ibn Bājja, Averroes, Siger of Brabant and John of Jandun, views and strands derived from the Platonic and Hermetic traditions played an important role in Nifo's argumentative strategy. Second, time and again, Nifo's vast erudition stands in the way of a clear and lucid argumentation. The uninhibited display of learning characteristic of Nifo often makes it difficult for him, as it now makes it difficult for us, to determine his own philosophical position. The extremely detailed discussions of the views of other authors, the endless string of solutions and refutations, and in general the lack of balance between *pars destruens* and *pars construens* easily distracts the reader's attention away from his rather succinctly formulated 'true' and, as we hope, personal views. Furthermore, criticisms of authors rarely mean that their views are radically banned, and in the end, Nifo's final conclusions are surprising similar to those of Siger and Jandun, who had been fiercely criticised throughout book 6 of *De intellectu*.

In the first chapters of *De intellectu*, Nifo presents and refutes the arguments of those who entertain the mortality of the soul and hold various views regarding beatitude: some hold that it consists of health and beauty (Carneades), other ones deem it richness and good fortune (Diogenes), pleasure (Epicurus), or glory (Stoics).[49] After a brief reference to the position of the Academics (happiness consists in a coincidence of three kinds of goods, regarding soul, body and fortune, respectively) and that of the Peripatetics (happiness is sought for its own sake), Siger's view in his lost *De foelicitate* is presented (happiness is identified with God, being the highest good and principle of all goods) and refuted with the help of passages from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[50] Following this, Nifo discusses whether God or any separate substance can be known, outlining first Themistius's arguments against knowledge of immaterial beings and then putting forth arguments based on Themistius and Alexander proving that the intellect may grasp separate substances: (1) knowledge of immaterial beings is less burdensome than that of material things; (2) the intellect has in potency the ability to abstract intellects; and (3) the intellect may attain this end through a medium, namely the intellect in habit.[51]

Subsequently, Nifo presents the doubts Averroes had put forward concerning these arguments: (1) a distinction should be drawn between the intellect taken as intellect and the intellect insofar as it is linked to the human body; (2) if one accepts that the intellect as intellect always knows the separate substances, it cannot be explained why we do not know them from the start but only at the end of our intellectual development. Then, the arguments listed above are defended. Themistius proved that what is possible to the intellect as intellect, is also possible to the human

[49] Nifo, *De intellectu*, VI, chs. 2–8, fols 53^{v}–54^{v}.

[50] Ibid., chs. 9–13, fols 54^{v}–55^{r}.

[51] Ibid., chs. 14–15, fols 55^{rv}.

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being: (i) the capabilities of the form extend to its *substratum*, and (ii) the intellect is the first, and thus the final perfection of the human being. He also proved that the intellect, as it knows materials in virtue of abstraction, does not meet any problem in grasping more abstract beings. Furthermore, according to Nifo, Averroes has shown that Alexander's arguments are conclusive if the material intellect is viewed as immaterial and eternal, and the speculative intellect as a dispositional medium for the knowledge of separate substances.[52]

Nifo lists a series of arguments taken from Ibn Bājja, derived from Averroes's Long Commentary on *De anima* (see above),[53] and further arguments made by Averroes: (i) what is highly desired is attainable, because natural desires are not impossible; (ii) every capability detached from matter may know whatever knowable object; (iii) unknown cognitive objects would exist in vain (*ociose*), that is, without being grasped. He criticises Siger for construing the latter argument solely from the point of view of the intelligences and Jandun for doing the same from the perspective of the human power to understand. Nifo's own view is that Averroes recognised an aptitude for a cognitive union both on the part of the human intellect as well as on that of the separate substances.[54]

In ch. 23, Nifo discusses 13 fundamental problems concerning Averroes's doctrine, the first four of which are discussed in an extremely detailed way in the chapters 24 to 53.

What is True (Philosophical) Happiness?

First, Nifo presents an (anonymous) position – one quite interesting from a historical point of view – which suggests that beatitude consists formally in the loving of God, more precisely in a love based upon an intuitive knowledge of God. This position is refuted: (i) happiness cannot be an act or operation that is distinct from the essence of the intellect; (ii) the act of happiness is not intuitive love, but primarily comprehension.[55] After a discussion of yet another position, Averroes's true opinion is exposed as based on the view that the objects of intellect and will are identical, just as intellect and will are but one faculty. Although the intellect grasps its object 'absolutely', while the will does so 'sub indifferentia fugae vel consensus', their happiness is one and the same. God is primarily an object of the intellect, and of the will only insofar as the latter 'contracts' the act of knowledge. Furthermore, inferior intellects may know God in two ways, that is, either through His essence or through

[52] Ibid., chs. 16–17, fols 55^{v}–56^{r}.

[53] It is worth remembering here that Ibn Bājja died when Averroes was only 10 years and that everything known of Ibn Bājja for the Latins came from the Long Commentary on *De anima* by Averroes.

[54] Ibid., chs. 18–21, fols 56^{r}–57^{r}.

[55] Ibid., chs. 25–26, fols 57^{v}–58^{r}.

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the essence of an inferior intellect. Finally, the agent intellect is twofold: God and a level of perfection of the rational soul.[56] Thus, humans may know God in two ways, through His essence and through the essence of his own intellect:

> In the second way, the lower intellect understands (*intelligit*) the higher one through the essence of the lower one. For instance, the intellect of the Moon understands God through the essence of the Moon's intellect, and in this way it understands God Himself, considering that, compared to the intellect of the Moon, God is the agent principle. Therefore, the relationship of the lower intellect to God is as if the lower intellect were the form and the end according to the *secundaria intentio* [i.e., on a conceptual level] and this is what led Siger and his followers astray, for, in one respect, God is the end and the form of all lower intellects, that is, with respect to the *esse intentionale* [i.e., from the point of view of knowledge], in another, He is the agent principle, moved as it were by a second intention, and therefore the lower intellect understands God through its own essence, just as the intellect of the Moon understands God through the essence of the Moon's intellect. I have examined this whole question in my comment of the book *On the Soul*.[57]

Whether the Conjunction is Immediate or Mediate

The discussion of the second issue initially regards the distinction between essence and potencies of the human soul. Given that humans are 'minimum capaces foelicitatis', Nifo asks whether they need any medium, and whether this medium is an intrinsic or extrinsic part of the soul. He refutes Jandun's position, which is based on the mediating role of the speculative intellect, itself made up of intelligible species: (i) the intellect would know the separate substances through accidents (species), not through their essences; (ii) we would not know them through an eternal intellection; (iii) the respective intellections would regard the agent, not the form; (iv) the known being would have an intellect; (v) the agent intellect's 'continuation' would depend upon our knowing; (vi) there would be no new or ancient accident in separate substances except one depending upon material reality. Nifo then presents his own view: just as the intellect of the Moon depends on God in three ways, namely as efficient cause, form and end, the speculative intellect depends upon the separate intellects and thus on God.[58] The consequence of this argument is that the union with separate intellects is stronger than that between universal and individual, and that God eventually is known as form, when we know Him through His essence:

> The speculative intellect depends on the separate substances, and above all on God, according to three meanings of 'cause,' i.e., according to the categories of efficient, formal and final cause. I shall therefore say that, just as the intellect of the Moon understands (*intelligit)* God through the essence of God with respect to the notion of form and end, and through its own essence with respect to the notion of agent, and, as it were, a posteriori, in the same way,

[56] Ibid., chs. 27–28, fols 58^{r}–58^{v}.

[57] Ibid., ch. 28, fols 58^{rv}.

[58] Ibid., chs. 29–39, fols 58^{v}–61^{r}.

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being perfected and formed (*adepti ac formati*) by the speculative intellect, we depend on the separate intellects and the first intellect, i.e., God, according to a threefold bond of dependence: end, form and agent.[59]

On Whether Beatitude Occurs in This Life or After Death According to Averroes

Nifo defends the thesis that the connection between the intellect and the human body allows knowledge of the separate substances: (1) a potency and a natural desire would be idle; (2) after death no intellectual memory survives, thus beatitude is possible only in this life; (3) the rational soul is an adequate perfection which may develop its possible operations, among which happiness; (4) body does not oppose soul; (5) *copulatio* does not oppose the embodied soul (support from biblical stories, Hermes Trismegistus, and Plato); (6) when the inclinations to opposed acts survive, beatitude would be impossible also after death. Thus, the Averroists hold that God may be the form of the intellect, considering the latter both as intellect in the strict sense and insofar as it is connected to the body.[60] This is the foundation of intuitive knowledge of God in this life:

> [Averroes] allowed that the soul could be united to the agent intellect (*copulatio animae cum intellectu agente*), who is God most high. When he says 'through philosophy,' he means a positive and privative medium, for philosophy includes a speculative and a practical part. Therefore, taking the intellect as a guide through philosophy, that is, when the soul is united (*copulata*) to the separate intellect through philosophy as if through an intermediary being, the soul reaches the highest level of knowledge (*summe sapuit*), for then it understands (*comprehendet*) God through His essence and the other separate intellects, and the soul, knowing (*apprehendens*) through the divine light, i.e., knowing the abstract divine intellects through their essence, it prophesises to the mortals and shares with them in a generous way the knowledge of them. This is the perfection of the soul.[61]

On Which Kind of Copulatio Provides Happiness

Here, the issue is first solved and then explained. The conjunction is a union of pre-existent, discontinuous beings 'nec remissis nec intensis', and therefore it is not to be confused with generation or mixture. Averroes distinguishes five types of

[59] Ibid., ch. 39, fol. 60^{v}.

[60] Ibid., chs. 40–42, fols 61^{rv}.

[61] Ibid., ch. 45, fol. 62^{v}. Recall, that Nifo interprets Averroes through the doctrine found in the pseudo-Averroes, *De beatitudine animae*.

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conjunction: (1) potential and agent intellects, (2) agent and speculative intellects, (3) potential intellect and the human being, (4) agent intellect and the human being, and (5) imaginative intention with potential intellect. As far as its nature is concerned, the agent intellect is always connected to the possible intellect and thus no medium is required, because the last of the separate intelligences grasps the *abstracta supra se* through the latter's and its own essence. However, insofar as the intellects are connected to us, this *copulatio* is twofold, namely as agent to *passum* (the agent intellect generating known objects that are received in the possible intellect), on the one hand, and as form, when the agent intellect becomes the potential intellect's essential intellection, on the other. Some propositions are derived from these considerations: (1) something (i.e., the agent intellect) may be form and agent with respect to the same substratum; (2) something may be *agens sui* in different forms: the agent intellect generates the speculative intellect which in turn causes the potential intellect's acquisition of the agent intellect as form; (3) the agent intellect is the efficient cause of all known things; (4) it is not the intellection that causes the conjunction, but the other way round.[62]

Moreover, the conjunction of the agent intellect with the speculative intellect is twofold: (a) the agent intellect creates the latter in the potential intellect, (b) the speculative intellect is a dispositional medium through which the agent intellect becomes the form of the potential intellect. Thus, two propositions can be formulated: (i) the *copulatio* of the agent and speculative intellects precedes that between agent and material intellects; (ii) not the speculative but the material intellect is the 'real matter' of the agent intellect.[63] Once the other conjunctions have been expounded, Averroes's ladder to happiness can be presented: apprehension of individual objects, the acquisition of intellectually known objects, and, through the formation of the speculative intellect, the acquisition of the agent and material intellects; happiness has two subjects, one is proximate (potential intellect), the other is remote (the human being).[64]

On Whether Human Beings are Like God in the State of Happiness, As Themistius States

Nifo argues that human beings become like God because they are formed by the superior intellects and because they may know all things. In this sense human beings are like a universe and connect material things to God.[65]

[62] Ibid., chs. 46–47, fol. 63^{r}.

[63] Ibid., ch. 48, fols 63^{rv}.

[64] Ibid., chs 49–51, fols 63^{rv}.

[65] Ibid., ch. 54, fol. 64^{r}.

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On Whether the Agent Intellect is Connected to us Before it is Known by us, or Before we Begin to Understand Through It

The knowledge of the agent intellect precedes its being conjoined, because every new relationship requires a new foundation, which can only be the intellection, as sensation and some unknown disposition are to be excluded. We depend upon the agent intellect as form, end, and efficient cause, and thus we know this intellect through our essence or through its own essence.[66]

On Whether the Intellection of the Happy Human Being is 'New' or Eternal

This issue is once again solved with the help of Averroes who argues that the intellection of those who are happy is eternal, and yet, it appears to be 'new': (1) it is an operation that denominates a new substratum; (2) it is an operation caused by the agent intellect, and every operation that is caused is something new; (3) if it were eternal, the human being would be eternal too; (4) nothing eternal depends upon something transitory.[67]

On Whether This Intellection is Intuitive or Abstractive

Against Arabic (al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja) and Latin (Aquinas, Giles) authors who hold that we cannot grasp the separate substances through intuitive knowledge, Nifo argues that our intellect may know the separate substances through their essences: (1) the object of our intellect is being, and thus nothing of the existing reality can be excluded from its reach; (2) there cannot be any process *in infinitum*; (3) as the senses grasp their object through intuition and abstraction, the intellect cannot be deprived of these capabilities.[68]

On Whether a Master May Communicate it to a Pupil

This issue is easily solved, as every well-prepared pupil (with regard to bodily, vegetative, sensitive and intellectual capabilities) is ready to accept the communication of his master, or of several specialised masters. Nifo also stresses the importance of virtues and internal senses.[69]

[66] Ibid., ch. 55, fol. 64^{r}.

[67] Ibid., ch. 56, fol. 64^{v}.

[68] Ibid., ch. 57, fols 64^{v}–65^{r}.

[69] Ibid., ch. 58, fol. 65^{r}.

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On Whether the Human Being is Able to Contact Separate Substances Through Intellecta Falsa

This issue also deserves little discussion. Falsely known objects, that is, false propositions, cannot ground or lead to *continuatio* or *copulatio*, as they are external to the 'course of nature.' They are present in the potential, not in the agent intellect.[70]

On Whether Human Beings When They Start to be Happy, Start to Know by Means of the Agent Intellect

The problem of whether initial happiness entails an immediate knowledge of the agent intellect and God is similarly solved in a single chapter. There are two ways in which something can come to be: (1) being disposed to generation (the induction of the form in matter), (2) to start being generated (the form starts being in matter). Our happiness entails knowledge of the agent intellect in the second sense only, since the first type is only a predisposition; eventually, man knows the agent intellect as a form and an end (through its essence), and also as an agent (through our essence).[71]

On Whether Separate Substances are Known all Together or in a Certain Order

The solution to this problem offers a fine example of the intricate link between astrology, cosmology and noetics in Nifo's view of intellectual beatitude. The separate intellects contain the speculative intellect in a certain order (Saturn to Moon), while the speculative intellect contains the intelligences *a posteriori* like an effect contains its cause. Thus, when the potential intellect is joined to God as a form, it is joined to all intermediary intellects, but in a twofold manner, namely regarding their nature as well as their origin. The intermediary intellects mediate in two directions, climbing the ladder less means of knowledge (that is, forms and/or intentions) are involved, and thus one reaches a superior level of conjunction.[72]

[70] Ibid., ch. 59, fol. 65^{r}.

[71] Ibid., ch. 60, fols 65^{rv}.

[72] Ibid., ch. 61, fol. 65^{v}. The ascent of the human intellect through the hierarchy of intelligences which are ordered according to the order of the planets to which they are related is borrowed from Averroes, *De animae beatitudine*; cf. infra.

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On Whether Several Humans can be Happy Through One Happiness

The solution of this last issue is based on the distinction between a privative and a positive kind of adequacy, happiness being adequate to all human beings in a positive, not in a privative sense. Accordingly, the same happiness can exist in several persons.[73]

Only at this point can Nifo expound the foundations of Aristotle's view.[74] The rational soul, including its vegetative and sensitive capabilities, cannot be divided into a plurality of souls with different 'latitudes.' The rational soul triggers intellectual (prudence, wisdom, wit, memory) and ethical (temperance, liberality, equity, friendship) virtues as well as several passions (fear, hate, love, pleasure), habits and potencies. The latter are faculties that arise from the essence of soul. Passions arise from appetite and the body, while habits are dispositions that arise in sensitive appetite. The rational soul may operate on different levels but never at the same time, since lower levels may disturb higher activities.[75]

Nifo then discusses the perfection of the rational part of the soul according to Aristotle's view. An intelligible can be conceived of in three ways: (1) 'in time', that is accompanied by the perception of time, more or less abstracted from the changing nature of matter; (2) 'in the continuum', i.e., according to Aristotelian categories for analyzing natural reality; and (3) according to its own nature. The first type is twofold: (i) the ratio of the sensible form in itself, known through abstraction, and (ii) the ratio of sensible objects which concern mobile matter (accidentally in time). The second type is of two kinds, too: (i) *per se*, such as, quantity, shape, number, motion, rest, and (ii) what is conceived by the intellect when it applies to imagination, that is, mathematics (i.e., geometry). Finally, the third type is of two kinds, too: (i) accidentally (quiddities of sensible things) and in itself (God, the intellects). The rational soul develops through knowledge of the intelligibles in time (natural science) and natural reality (imagination) until it reaches the metaphysical intelligibles, when the speculative intellect is formed, and finally by way of knowledge of the separate substances until the first intellect is reached. Who does not acquire beatitude in this life, does not reach it in the afterlife.[76]

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[73] Nifo, *De intellectu*, VI, ch. 62, fols 65^{v}–66^{r}.

[74] Nifo argues that first another issue needs to be examined, namely the soul's operations and the happiness after death. After having discussed several doubts, he concludes that, given its immortality, it cannot be denied that the soul develops some activity after death. Nifo, *De intellectu*, VI, ch. 63–64. Doubts are solved in ch. 71.

[75] Nifo, *De intellectu*, VI, ch. 65, fol. 66^{v}. See ibid., II, ch. 17, fol. 21^{v}: 'Sed rationalis anima in sui operatione nobilissima, scilicet in speculatione summa primi entis, quae est possibilis ei ac naturalissima, in qua summe quiescit, impeditur a corpore.'

[76] Ibid., ch. 66, fol. 67^{rv}.

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The sensitive appetite is ruled by practical syllogisms, from which habits originate. Then appetitive potencies arise from the habits, and when they are perfected, the sensual part is turned into the intellect. The happiness of the sensible part is an operation on the passions according to the instructions of practical reason, so that the conjunction of the intellect with reason is eventually attained. Only then can a series of further *copulationes* become possible: speculative intellect, separate intellects and God. By contrast, the misery or damnation of the human soul after death consists of a complete conversion of reason to sense. The human soul will suffer fire on the basis of the (negative) habits and passions that survive. Thus, misery consists of an everlasting desire in pleasure.[77]

This picture raises new doubts, however: (1) if the acquisition (*adeptio*) of the speculative intellect and moral habits are required for reaching a condition of happiness, then women cannot reach beatitude,[78] and the same holds for children who die young; (2) what is the destiny of the soul after death? Nifo replies that the first doubt is a problem for Peripatetic philosophy only (women have a minor disposition to be united to the intellect), not for the Christian faith. And as far as newborn children are concerned, happiness after death depends indeed, according to Aristotle, upon the happiness acquired during earthly life. For the solution of the second doubt Aristotle's texts are of little help Plato, Speusippus and Socrates held that the motors of the orbs are in the stars, rather than in any other part of the orb, and, relying on their views, Nifo argues that the relationship between the soul and the stars is based on the seed of the first intellect, which the stars transmit to the soul. This also explains the transmission of the characteristics of the celestial bodies to individual human beings; thus, after death, every soul returns to its proper star.[79] And with this rather surprising cosmological perspective Nifo concludes his treatment of human beatitude in *De intellectu*.

In his commentary on Averroes's *De animae beatitudine*, Nifo substantially develops the same ideas, but with some interesting specifications. From the outset, he states that the human soul acquires divine being when in conjunction with the separate substances.[80] The material intellect knows the agent intellect through the latter's essence, when it becomes the form of the material intellect. Thus, a beatific state is reached characterised by a unity of material and agent intellect and the *res intellecta*. As said before, in this commentary Nifo feels the need to provide some pious clarifications. For example, he states that Averroes argued for a purely natural way to beatitude. Nifo, however, referring to his *De intellectu*, maintains that this state is provided by God on the basis of *meritoriae actiones*.[81] Furthermore, in this

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[77] Ibid., chs. 67–68, fols 67^{v}–68^{r}.

[78] This phrase suggests that at least some Peripatetic philosophers regarded women as intellectually inferior to men.

[79] Ibid., chs 69–70, fols 68^{rv}. See ibid., I, ch. 14, fol. 8^{r}: 'Videtur ergo Plato dictum Mosis sic exponere quod Deus substantias omnes spiritales creavit, ut animas, et eas posuit in stellis tanquam semina et exordia animalium humanorum.'

[80] Agostino Nifo, *In Averrois de animae beatitudine* (Venice: Heirs of Ottaviano Scoto, 1508), fol. 2^{v}.

[81] Nifo, *In Averrois de animae beatitudine,* fol. 19^{v}. Probably, Nifo, *De intellectu*, VI, cap. 70, fol. 68^{v}.

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work, he still seems to accept Siger's view of God as the formal object of our beatitude.[82] In this case too, though, as already happened in *De intellectu*, Nifo argues that humans are able to develop knowledge of God in two ways, i.e., as a form and an end, on the one hand, and as efficient cause, on the other. Two types of knowledge correspond to these two ways, one through the essence of God and another through the essence of the agent intellect, respectively. Indeed, when the whole speculative intellect has been formed, there is no need anymore for a *conversio ad phantasmata*, as the human being understands directly through the essence of the agent intellect.[83] Nifo stresses again the central role of the celestial hierarchy of the separate intelligences and God in the realization of human happiness.[84] Beatitude is the outcome of a progression of the intellect which develops through the habitual and the speculative intellect. Once the latter is fully actualised (*totum et perfectum*), the human being is united *per essentiam* to all separate substances, and this becomes the foundation for an intuitive knowledge of God, that is, a knowledge though *copulatio ut forma*.[85]

Conclusion

Nifo's theory of beatitude is a fine example of a rigorous conceptual analysis in Peripatetic style. It is articulated through a consistent application of the principles of Aristotelian natural philosophy and logics to the realm of (separate) intellects. Nifo shows how progressive apprehension of intelligible knowledge enables the human soul to ascend to God. For example, the assumption that the same intellect, namely the agent intellect, may be linked to us as agent and as form is crucial in Nifo's reasoning. It should be noted that Nifo, like Averroes before him,[86] attempts to delimitate the physical nature and implications of his categorial framework. Thus, the process of *copulatio* is viewed as a union, and explicitly not as generation or mixture (see, e.g., issue 4). Yet, at first sight the hierarchy of and the several distinctions between intellects appear as rather artificial and unreal, in particular that between potential, speculative and habitual intellect. It should be borne in mind, however, that the habitual and speculative intellects are largely identical and designate a state of the material or possible intellect, while the speculative intellect is seen as a dispositional medium between material and agent intellect. The agent intellect, on the other hand, is not viewed as 'detached' from the possible intellect, and can be reached only in *copulatio*. By contrast, Nifo is well aware that true intellectual growth is based on the intimate link between active and receptive qualities of the human mind. Thus, *intellectio*

Uncorrected Proof

[82] Ibid., fol. 20^{rb}.

[83] Ibid., fol. 22^{rb}.

[84] Ibid., fols 23va–25va.

[85] Ibid., fol. 25va.

[86] See Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, pp. 496–497: the notions of form and matter in the intellectual realm indicate a proportion or disposition.

Editor's Proof

presupposes *copulatio*, not the other way round. This entails, however, a more or less veiled circularity, not to say a *petitio principii*, in noetic reasoning, since it is tacitly assumed that the final aim of the human intellectual drive is the basis of its very functioning. In a similar vein, the speculative intellect is seen as a product of the activity of the agent intellect with respect to the possible intellect, as well as a dispositional medium or condition for their conjunction.

However, although Nifo's analytical description of the functioning of the Aristotelian mind does not transcend the bounds of its implicit categorial frame, the philosopher after all develops some remarkable positions. In book 6, Nifo argues for an intuitive knowledge of the separate substances and of God, echoing the frequently savaged Jandun and anticipating Spinoza's third kind of knowledge: intuitive knowledge is knowledge through the essence of a thing and guarantees true happiness (*Ethics*, II, propositions 45–47). In Nifo's view, however, beatitude is purely intellectual: the eventual eternal joy which derives from this kind of knowledge is not due to the intervention of the will, and therefore cannot be analysed in terms of a theory of intellectual love. Furthermore, the cognitive union with God is not supernatural, as no medium granted by God is required. The speculative intellect alone suffices as the positive medium for our union with the essence of the agent intellect and thereby with all other separate substances. For Nifo, such a union or *adeptio* is the human being's highest good fortune and it is achievable in this life and by wholly natural means.[87]

In the final chapters Nifo touches upon questions, which also have a more general ethical and theological impact, e.g. the relation between body and soul, that between sense and reason, and that between the embodied soul and the state of soul after death, the position of women and children, and the outlook of misery and happiness. Surprisingly, intellectual *copulatio* does not oppose the embodied soul. Who does not reach beatitude in this terrestrial life, cannot reach it in the afterlife. This view is intimately connected to Nifo's idea, developed in the final chapter of book IV, of the human soul as a 'potestative' whole (*totum quoddam potestativum et essentiale*) which is not split up into distinct faculties (*potestates*).[88] Only the conversion of sense to reason allows ruling passions and vices, firmly connecting the exercise of practical reason to its *copulatio* with the intellect, and that of the intellect to the separate substances. Thus, a balanced psychological life, based on the cooperation between sensitive drives and intellectual control, guarantees happiness, both practical and theoretical.

Uncorrected Proof

[87] Nifo, *De intellectu*, VI, chs 34, 40, 42, 43–44, fols 59^{v}–60^{r}, 61^{rv}, 61^{v}–62^{r}.

[88] Ibid., IV, ch. 24, fols 48^{v}–49^{r}.

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Chapter 8
Averroistic Themes in Girolamo Cardano's *De immortalitate animorum*

José Manuel García Valverde

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Despite the great number of subjects discussed, Girolamo Cardano's principal aim in writing *De immortalitate animorum* (1545) was the refutation of the mortalist claims advanced by Pietro Pomponazzi in his *De immortalitate animae* (1516).[1] Cardano's mid-sixteenth-century Renaissance Aristotelianism. Although Cardano had studied at

Translated from Spanish by Anna Akasoy and Guido Giglioni.

[1] Cardano published his *De immortalitate animorum* when he was 43 years old. The treatise precedes the encyclopaedic works of the 1550 s (*De subtilitate* and *De varietate rerum*), which gave him renown and recognition among his contemporaries. A recent edition of *De immortalitate animorum* has been published by José Manuel García Valverde (Milan: Angeli, 2006). Quotations are from this edition. A Spanish translation by J. M. García Valverde is available in http://filolinux.dipafilo.unimi.it/cardano/index.php. (Progetto Cardano, Università degli Studi di Milano). Also, for a contextualisation of *De immortalitate animorum* within Cardano's large literary production, especially regarding its relationship to the preceding work, the 1544 *De sapientia*, see Alfonso Ingegno, 'Cardano tra *De sapientia* e *De immortalitate animorum*. Ipotesi per una periodizzazione', in *Girolamo Cardano, le opere, le fonti, la vita*, eds Marialuisa Baldi and Guido Canziani (Milan: Angeli, 1997), pp. 61–79. Finally, with no intention of giving an exhaustive bibliographic account on *De immortalitate animorum* and Cardano's philosophy of the mind, I will refer the reader to the 'Estudio preliminar' to the edition mentioned above (pp. 19–105) as well as to the following essays: Alfonso Ingegno, *Saggio sulla filosofia di Cardano* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1980), pp. 61–78; Ian Maclean, 'Cardano on the Immortality of the Soul', in *Cardano e la tradizione dei saperi*, eds Marialuisa Baldi and Guido Canziani (Milan: Angeli, 2003), pp. 191–208; Id., 'Cardano's Eclectic Psychology and its Critique by Julius Caesar Scaliger', *Vivarium*, 46 (2008), pp. 392–417; Guido Canziani, 'L'anima, la *mens*, la palingenesi. Appunti sul terzo libro del *Theonoston*', in *Cardano e la tradizione dei saperi*, pp. 209–248; Guido Giglioni, '*Mens* in Girolamo Cardano', in *Per una storia del concetto di mente*, ed. by Eugenio Canone, 2 vols (Florence: Olschki, 2005–2007), II, pp. 83–122.

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the University of Padua, he cannot be considered, strictly speaking, a Paduan Aristotelian representing a monolithic intellectual movement. During the early modern period, Aristotelianism developed as an exegetic matrix capable of generating a number of different interpretations regarding both the matrix itself and the universe in general. This point is confirmed *immortalitate animorum*. Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae* seems to represent for Cardano a challenge to demonstrate that the theory of the immortality of the soul could still find textual support in Aristotle's *De anima*. Although Cardano was not a professional commentator of Aristotle, he believed he had the skills required to identify the true core of his psychology. In spite of the many centuries separating them, he reckoned that he could disclose the reasons behind Aristotle's tentative statements concerning the immortality of our souls. Finally, he thought that he had found a theoretical key to unlock unexpected exegetical results from the third book of Aristotle's *De anima*: in matters concerning the theory of the intellect, Cardano maintained that a plurality of active intellects were subject to cycles of transmigration, independent of any process of natural generation, through which the individual history of human minds, bound to the fate of their perishable bodies, were transcended by individual active intellects.

Among the references used by Cardano to support this interpretation, Averroes and the Averroist tradition are of the utmost importance. After Aristotle, Averroes is the most frequently cited philosopher in *De immortalitate animorum*. He is followed by Galen (certainly an important presence), Plato, and much less frequently, Pomponazzi, Alexander of Aphrodisias and others. The works of Averroes in Latin translation mentioned by Cardano include a variety of texts. Among these – as to be expected – the *Commentarium magnum* on Aristotle's *De anima* stands out, but there are also numerous quotations from other commentaries written by Averroes on a number of Aristotelian works, such as *De sensu*, *De somno* and *De caelo*. One should also not forget the *Destructio destructionum*, which Cardano cites as *Disputationes*. It is apparent, therefore, that Averroes's thought, more specifically, his distinctive interpretation of Aristotelian psychology, was of great importance for Cardano.

Averroes is frequently mentioned in the first chapter, which presents a long list of objections against the immortality of the human soul *tout court*, or against the most specific version of the theory of individual immortality. He is often referred to when the background of Aristotle's texts is analysed with respect to whether or not he was in favour of the immortality of the human soul. Averroes also plays a distinctive role when, starting from Chap. 11, Cardano launches into the explanation of his own [AU1] theory of the eternity and reincarnation of individual active intellects. Averroes plays therefore a key role not only as an authoritative interpreter – which is all too natural –, but also as a source of creative inspiration. It is not by accident that we can find traces of Averroen noetics in Cardano's own views, regarding, for example, the substantial character of the active intellect (although he disagreed regarding the substantial character of the passive intellect) and the relationship between the active and the passive intellects in the human soul, where they constitute almost two complementary aspects of one reality (i.e., the receptive and active moments in the unitary process of intellection). Averroean echoes aside, one should not forget that for Cardano the most appropriate solution to the question of the immortality of the

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soul, both from an Aristotelian and from a rational point of view, had to reconcile the aspect of individual immortality with that of intellective unity for all human beings. He thus reconsidered the theory of such a unity in a specific chapter – Chap. 9, 'The opinion of the unity of the intellect and its foundations' – which is the main subject of this article.

It is significant that in the short, but dense chapter devoted to Pomponazzi's position, Cardano seems to agree with the way Pomponazzi had criticised Averroes's theory of the unity of the intellect and accepts his verdict (as well as that of Thomas Aquinas). This is quite important considering that Cardano's primary intention in his work was to respond to Pomponazzi on his very own territory, i.e., natural reason and Aristotle's works. For Pomponazzi, the notion of a collective immortality resulting from the substantial and independent nature of the material intellect[2] is not convincing since we do not find any evidence of such substantial and independent nature in our thinking activity. Pomponazzi followed the Aristotelian-Thomistic principle that 'acting follows being' (*agere sequitur esse*), i.e., that the degree of activity of a thing corresponds to its degree of being, and argued that, if the intellective soul shows a kind of activity which does not depend on the body at all, this activity would provide evidence for both its independence with regard to the body and – as Averroes had already claimed – its eternity and unity for the entire human species. In fact, we know that Pomponazzi's conclusion intended precisely to dismiss the very notion of such an independent activity of the intellective soul, because he insisted, the knowledge of the intellect for Aristotle depended *ex principiis* on the senses and the representations of the senses (*phantasmata*). Having denied the complete independence of our intellective activity, Pomponazzi rejected the very premise of Averroes's interpretation and the kind of immortality implied in this theory. Then he examined other positions regarding immortality, especially that of Thomas Aquinas, and drew some important conclusions which would turn out to be useful for later in the discussion. The first one of these conclusions is the already mentioned idea that, from the point of view of Aristotle's though, there is no activity in which the soul engages that is completely independent of the body.

De immortalitate animorum is clearly a significantly less systematic piece than Pomponazzi's treatise. This is apparent, for example, in the way Cardano criticises Plato. Chapter 3 is devoted to Plato's position on the soul, and yet criticisms of Platonic solutions reappear in the following chapter. The same is the case with Averroes. Although all of Chap. 9 is a refutation of Averroes, earlier in the text Cardano conveniently uses the commentator as an ally. There, he lists the reasons which challenge or deny an individual immortality in which all the experiences and memories accumulated during one individual's life are preserved and represent the foundation for a just and inexorable judgement after death.

[2] From the point of view of Averroes, there is no place in the field of Aristotelianism to appeal for an afterlife. Thus, the expression of 'collective immortality' must be understood as referring to the intelligible contents of the eternal Material Intellect. These contents, initially extracted from the imaginative powers of particular perishing human beings, become subsequently immortal when they are collected by an intellectual entity which is in itself everlasting.

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Moreover, there were further reasons why the kind of solution presented by Cardano in *De immortalitate animorum* could be open to Averroistic influences. Averroes has long been considered the most distinguished advocate of a clear distinction between the principles of revealed religion and those of natural reason and philosophy. The position that, generally speaking, came to be known as 'Averroist' assumed that, while from a philosophical point of view, it is necessary to conclude that the rational soul is one for all human beings and that one can only expect a collective form of immortality, from a religious point of view, it is believed that there are many souls which are individual and immortal. For all the ambiguities and uncertainties involved in such a position, the gist of the Averroist view was to claim that, if we endorse the principles of the Aristotelian physics and metaphysics, we can only accept the notion of a collective immortality in which any element of temporal individuality in the intellective soul gets lost. Averroes was the first to point out how a scrupulous examination of the Aristotelian principles would lead to the unequivocal separation of philosophy from faith.

Avicenna had gone to great lengths to reconcile the prerogatives of faith with those of natural reason in Aristotle's works. In response to him, Averroes showed that such a reconciliation relied on distorted understanding of the Aristotelian texts. Averroes's judgement on Avicenna was implacable. He was guilty of having tampered with the thought of Aristotle by mixing into it an intention which was completely foreign to him. 'This is on account of Avicenna, who followed Aristotle only in dialectics, but in other things he erred, and chiefly in the case of metaphysics. This is because he began, as it were, from his own perspective.'[3]

A century later Thomas Aquinas would once again try to reconcile Aristotle's philosophy with the theological assumptions of the Christian faith; at the same time, he denounced Averroes's interpretation of the Aristotelian texts as illegitimate. Aquinas thought that he could demonstrate the compatibility of Aristotle's metaphysics with the religious concept of the soul as a substance created directly by God, capable of surviving in the future, morally responsible both in this and in the other life, and finally, destined to take up its body again at the end of the world. For this reason, he embarked on the momentous task of reconciling the Aristotelian definition of the soul as the form of a body with the notion of the soul as substance or as substantial form which exists alone and is therefore capable of surviving the body. Thomas Aquinas referred to the disjunctive hypothesis advanced by Aristotle in the first book of *De anima*[4] in order to explain the existence of an activity of thought which belongs exclusively to the soul and which is developed without the help of the senses. The purpose was to demonstrate the essential independence of the

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[3] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 470; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. Richard C. Taylor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 374–375. See Amos Bertolacci's chapter in this volume.

[4] See Aristotle, *De anima*, I, 1, 403a9; trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 15: 'if this too is a kind of imagination, or at least is dependent upon imagination, even this cannot exist apart from the body.'

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efficient cause of this activity, i.e., the intellective soul.[5] In this sense, the human soul, insofar as it is a subsistent form (*hoc aliquid*), is immortal and continues to exist even without the body. However, this does not mean that it is not the form of the body. On the contrary, as form, the intellective soul is the principle that determines the human being and thinking is the activity which characterises the essence of the human being – the 'principle through which something is precisely this specific something' (*quo aliquid est hoc aliquid*). On the other hand, the intellective soul as the individual form of a particular human being is, in an Aristotelian sense, that principle which – as the first actuality of a living body – accounts for all the vital functions of a human being in accordance with the Aristotelian postulate that superior souls include the inferior ones.

The difficulty was how to reconcile the specifically intellective nature of the human soul with its role as a substantial form informing a particular body. To solve this question, as Aquinas decided to refer to a system of ontological degrees, where the intellective soul occupies an intermediary place between the material forms (which are exclusively *forms of*) and the separate forms (which are exclusively substantial forms).[6] This intermediary nature of the human soul manifests itself in its activity since the material forms act while being completely dependent on the body and matter, whereas the human soul is capable of rising above the body and of developing an independent activity. At the same time, its intellective activity is not as perfect as that of those forms which are completely separate and self-subsisting and which perceive by way of an act of direct and immediate intuition. In the case of human beings, their intellective activity is determined by the proximity to the body. As a result, it depends on a constant supply of sensible images and on discursive patterns of reasoning that are clearly not intuitive and cannot be completely disconnected from their object. This has something to do with the fact that the intelligible species has to be represented in the sensible image. This dependency characterises the degree of perfection which we human beings can achieve. For this reason, Aquinas did not hesitate to assert that after death, the power of our soul is in a certain way diminished:

> Thus to the soul according to its mode of being when united with the body belongs a mode of understanding which turns to the sense images of bodies found in corporeal organs (*per conversionem ad phantasmata corporum, quae in corporeis organis sunt*), whereas when separated from the body its mode of understanding, as in other immaterial substances, is to turn to things that are purely intelligible (*per conversionem ad ea quae sunt intelligibilia simpliciter*). Hence to understand by turning to sense images is as natural to the soul as being joined to the body, whereas to be separated from the body is off-beat for its nature (*praeter rationem suae naturae*), and so likewise is understanding without turning to sense images. The soul is joined to the body in order to be and act in accordance with its nature.[7]

[5] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 75, a. 2; *Quaestio de anima*, a. 14.

[6] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio de anima*, a. 1.

[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 89, a. 1; Blackfriars edition, 61 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964–1976; repr. 2006), vol. XII, trans. Paul. T. Durbin, pp. 139–141.

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In this way, the soul preserves after death a certain inclination (*habitudo*) towards the body to which it had given life. This tendency makes the soul individual and different from the other souls. Aquinas used this close relationship between the soul and its body in order to provide a philosophical explanation for the doctrine of resurrection.

We thus have here a response to the question of the separation between faith and reason which had already been favoured by Averroes and which later Averroists had emphasised even more. What Aquinas argued is that, from an Aristotelian point of view, not only it is not necessary to accept the intellective unity suggested by Averroes, but that, if one tries to interpret the texts correctly, one can explain on the basis of this interpretation and in a rational manner the Christian doctrine of the soul and its theological implications.

Christian authors criticised Aquinas for having considerably misinterpreted the Aristotelian texts in order to make them speak a language which they would never speak. As Bruno Nardi has pointed out, the cardinal Bessarion responded to Aquinas in his criticism of George of Trebizond in terms very similar to those used by Averroes against Avicenna. He argued that the view that the intellective soul is a substantial form and certainly individual, subsistent, initially communicating with the body and immortal *a parte post*, stands in direct contrast with the principles of Aristotle's metaphysics.[8] Pomponazzi adopted this criticism in his *De immortalitate animae* and offered a significantly more profound version of it. The opening sentences of chapter 8, in which Pomponazzi examines Aquinas's position, sum up the point in a very eloquent manner:

> I do not have the least doubt about the truth of this position, for it is sanctioned by the canonic Scripture, which has to be preferred to any human rational argument and proof based on experience, since it was given by God. However, what I think is a matter of doubt is whether these statements transcend the limits of nature to the point that they presuppose some principle that is revealed or accepted through faith, and are consonant with Aristotle's statements, as Thomas Aquinas maintains.[9]

This is followed by a long discussion in which Pomponazzi examines each of the fundamental tenets of Aquinas's conception of the soul in the light of Aristotle's philosophy. Here we do not need to delve into Pomponazzi's arguments. What we can say is that his aim was to target the theory of Aquinas on his own ground. For Pomponazzi, to assume that the soul has a certain kind of activity or action which is separate from the body and to claim that this activity is an essential characteristic of its nature would have been a notion foreign to Aristotle. Pomponazzi pointed out that, even if one could accept the thesis that intellection in itself is a process independent of the body, and that its achievement – the intelligible which is abstracted from matter – is evidence that the activity which led to this result cannot take place in its material subject (*subjectum*), this activity – as Aquinas himself had admitted –

[8] See Bruno Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), p. 446.

[9] Pietro Pomponazzi, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, ed. Gianfranco Morra (Bologna: Nanni & Fiammenghi, 1954), p. 82.

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still makes use of sensible images provided by the body. In this way, even though the rational soul does not need the body as its 'subject', it does need it as its 'object', and this ties the soul irrevocably to the body and prevents their separation. On the other hand, Aristotle had never spoken of the human rational soul as a substantial form in the same terms as Aquinas had done. Aristotle had distinguished only two kinds of substances: the spiritual substances, which could be separated from matter and were simple and immortal, and the corporeal substances, which are composed of matter and form, are corruptible and dissolve. The form of the spiritual substances is a *hoc aliquid*, whereas that of the corporeal ones is a *quo aliquid*, and according to Aristotelian principles, no *hoc aliquid* can be a *quo aliquid* at the same time. Aquinas effectively introduced a third kind of substance, which took the ambiguous role of the rational soul into account to the extent that partakes in the *hoc aliquid* as well as in the *quo aliquid*. He was able to justify this nature of the soul within a universal order of ontological hierarchies. However, what, according to Pomponazzi, he could not possibly do was to claim that this third nature had a place in the Aristotelian universe and that it could be explained with the help of the principles of Aristotelian metaphysics.

The position finally adopted by Pomponazzi was a reformulation of the theory of the double truth, which had caused such a great opposition when first introduced by the medieval Averroists. In his case, however, the split between the domains of faith and reason was much more conspicuous and appeared to be no less provocative. He simply decided to let the question of the immortality of the rational soul be a matter of faith and refrained from demonstrating it in a rational way. It was, after all, not only the case that one could prove in such a way a collective immortality as Averroes, among others, had maintained; one could also conclude that there was no possibility for any other kind of immortality. As was to be expected, this theory led to a major uproar which, however, never led to an official condemnation of its author. Many tried to refute the theory using Pomponazzi's own weapons. Kristeller published a list of authors who composed treatises of this kind: Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, the Augustinian hermit Ambrogio Fiandino, the Dominican Bartolomeo Spina, and his Aristotelian colleague Agostino Nifo. The polemical reaction reached such an extent that Pomponazzi saw himself obliged to respond to it with various works which were twice as long as the initial treatise (the *Apologia* and the *Defensorium*). Even though his voice quieted down over the course of time, the flame of the polemics continued to burn much longer.[10]

Cardano's *De immortalitate animorum* should be read as one of those texts which were strongly influenced by Pomponazzi's work as well as by the polemical reaction against it. The purpose of Cardano was to make a new attempt to harmonise

[10] See P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 193. To have a comprehensive view of the controversy, including the most significant aspects of Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae*, see Martin L. Pine, *Pietro Pomponazzi: Radical Philosopher of the Renaissance* (Padua: Antenore, 1986), pp. 124–234. I also would like to refer the reader to the impressive 'Introduzione' that Vittoria Perrone Compagni has provided with her Italian translation of *De immortalitate* (Florence: Olschki, 1999), pp. V-CI.

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Aristotelian thought with the notion of the immortality of the individual soul. His intention was to enter the arena of the 30-year debate not only with an original solution in his hands, but also with a thorough and definitive interpretation of Aristotle's work which had still not been achieved in the already long history of its exegesis. In order to be truly original, this very ambitious project could not ignore the difficulties already pointed out by Pomponazzi. He had to tackle the already established positions concerning the compatibility of the Aristotelian metaphysics with religious – in this case, Christian – beliefs.

The positions in question were fundamentally three. One was that adopted by Averroes in his critique of Avicenna, and endorsed afterwards by the medieval Averroists in their criticism of Aquinas. As we have seen, this led to the conclusion that the principles of Aristotelian psychology and metaphysics implied a notion of collective immortality, which is very different from what revealed faith suggested. The second position is represented by Aquinas, who did not see revealed faith as contradicting the principles of Aristotelian philosophy, and, as a result, saw no contradiction between reason and faith. The third position was the one defended by Pomponazzi in his *De immortalitate animae*, in which he rejected categorically the thesis that the immortality of the soul, in all its forms, had a place in the Aristotelian discourse, so that to confirm and defend such a doctrine could only be a matter of faith. These three positions can be arranged in the form of a board game, in which Aquinas is opposed to Averroes, Averroes is opposed to Avicenna and Pomponazzi finds himself first allied with Aquinas against Averroes and the Averroists, and later opposed to Aquinas himself. The rules of the game are concerned with a problem of exegetical nature regarding the Aristotelian texts, and therefore the battle took often place on terminological and linguistic grounds.

It was thus on this board and with these rules that Cardano decided to intervene in the debate. He rejected Averroes's notion of collective immortality – in fact, the very title of the treatise seems to state his rejection with the unusual mentioning of the plural *animi* (i.e., the minds) rather than the singular anima (i.e., the soul). Likewise, he rejected the introduction of elements that were foreign to the interpretation of Aristotelian texts. With this criticism, he implicitly joined the front of those who had criticised Aquinas for having distorted those texts in order to make them conform to Christian dogma. In this way, he challenged not only Aquinas, but also Albertus Magnus and John Philoponus:

> But perhaps here Philopon, Thomas and Albertus are not really what I need, for nobody could insinuate that they are not moved by their love for religion. Nobody could really doubts that Thomas and Albertus were most religious, having been included among the saints. John Philoponus of Alexandria wrote profusely against Proclus and Severus in favour of the Christian faith. He went so far as to assert the creation of the world, which nobody – pious as he may be – questions, and all – Aristotelian as they may be – understand. Of all, Theophrastus is the only one I need in order to clarify the opinion of Aristotle.[11]

[11] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 257; *Opera omnia*, ed. Charles Spon, 10 vols (Lyons: Jean-Antoine Huguetan and Marc-Antoine Ravaud, 1663; reprint: Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1966), II, p. 493b.

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Finally, he also rejected the way Pomponazzi had interpreted Aristotle's theory of the intellect since he had obstinately ignored the evidence in which Aristotle appeared to maintain the immortality of the soul. Cardano tried to read Aristotle's texts in a faithful and meticulous way. His aim was obviously to show that remaining on the same argumentative level as Pomponazzi, one could overturn his claim that it was impossible to defend in a rational way the immortality of the soul. We could summarise the various stages of Cardano's argument by saying that, against Averroes, he affirmed a plurality of subsisting souls; against Aquinas, he engaged in an interpretation of Aristotle's texts devoid of any religious assumption; and against Pomponazzi, he presented this 'purist' reading as the only acceptable premise leading to his conclusion, i.e., that Aristotle was in fact in favour of some kind of individual immortality, even though this view of immortality had little to do with the concept defended by Aquinas.

Although independent, Cardano adopted elements of other and historically distant interpretations. Against Averroes, Cardano argued that it was possible to defend a certain kind of individual immortality on the basis of Aristotle's thought. In his interpretative crusade against Averroism in general and against those who – before Averroes himself – had emphasised the external and separable character of the intellect, at least the active one (e.g. Alexander of Aphrodisias), he stressed that the intellective faculties which manifest themselves *in* our souls require necessarily that *in* our soul there be an active and a passive principle. This is almost like saying that the active intellect, in the same way as the passive intellect, is an integral part of our individuality. In interpreting Aristotle's words in *De anima* III, 5, Cardano embraced the view that Aristotle was referring here to the faculties within the soul and did not give any reason to believe that an external character should be attributed to the active principle of the rational faculty and, even less so, to the passive principle, as Averroes had done. In doing so, Cardano joined, amongst others, Themistius and Aquinas. There was, however, something else in this text that for Cardano was just as unequivocal, namely, the immortality of the active intellect, and only of the active intellect, here defined as a completely impassive principle and pure activity, which, by definition, cannot be affected by any information accumulated by the subject during his lifetime. One can say, thus, that Cardano was prepared to sacrifice one's memories on the altar of individual immortality, all the memories of a life, including any knowledge acquired, to which is added what is morally transcendent (i.e., the conscience regarding any crimes and evil deeds committed). In this way, Cardano suggested that the immortality as endorsed by Aquinas, which was acceptable from an orthodox religious point of view, was as foreign to Aristotle as Avicenna's interpretation had seemed to Averroes. Due to his desire to limit himself to Aristotle's texts, Cardano, just like Averroes, moved away from what could be affirmed on the basis of revealed faith. After all, the assumption that a number of different substantial active intellects, finite in their number, are in the process of being continuously reincarnated must have sounded so repulsive to orthodox Christians as the Averroist notion of intellective unity.

Chapter 9 of *De immortalitate animorum* is entirely devoted to an analysis of Averroes's idea of the intellect's unity (active and passive) and it contains a thorough

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refutation of its premises. Cardano follows the scholastic habit of listing the arguments in favour of the opposite view first and then discussing and refuting them. He throws invectives at the empty chatter, the incoherent discourse and the false professionalism of those who defended the view of the intellect as one. This position has, in Cardano's opinion, never been defended with the same arguments. On the contrary, among those who, in one way or another, embraced the doctrine, there was considerable divergence, some of it insurmountable. Ultimately, the insubstantial character of the opinions, the already mentioned incoherence and the distorted reading of the Aristotelian texts are the reasons that have made Averroism a deplorable philosophy and its limitations need to be denounced. With this judgement, Cardano (and we return to the board game here) joined Pomponazzi and Thomas Aquinas. In fact, he mentions both as the most distinguished leaders in the fight on which he says he is embarking in this treatise.

In his refutation of Averroes, Cardano argues that to assume the complete individuality of the soul would imply an infinite number of souls, given the fact that the world, according to one of the fundamental postulates of Aristotelianism, is supposed to be eternal. However, Aristotle is also aware of the unsolvable logical difficulties that would result from assuming that something can be infinite in actuality.[12] It is therefore understandable why the difficulties resulting from a numerical diversity of the souls lend support to the notion of the unity of the intellect. Themistius had already offered this reason as one of the most important arguments in favour of the unity of the intellect *in actu*. The reasoning is that the specific individuation of the souls is due to their bodies, and therefore, when these perish, their individuality, too, ceases to exist. This argument appears in Chap. 1 of Cardano's *De immortalitate animorum* in a quite detailed way:

> We should consider whether souls differ only in number or also in species if they are many. If they differ in species, there will be as many human beings as species of human beings. If they differ only in number, or because of their form, then, again, it is necessary that human beings differ in species. However, if they differ only because of matter, either they will be variously corruptible because of that, or they will not depend on that and will be incorruptible: therefore, there will be only one soul (*animus unus*) for all human beings.[13]

Cardano is turning the question of the immortality of the soul into a dilemma where we are compelled to choose between dismissing the notion that we can survive in one form or another after death, or subscribing to the depersonalised kind of immortality advocated by the Averroists.

This argument was commonly used in Averroistic circles as is obvious from the way Siger of Brabant employs it in his commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*.

[12] See Aristotle, *Physics*, III, 5, 204a20-34.

[13] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, pp. 141–142; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 463a.

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Aquinas cites it in various places in support of the position of the unity of the intellect.[14] Not surprisingly, it appears in *De unitate intellectus*, but also in the *Summa contra gentiles*:

> For it seems that every form which is one specifically and many in number is individuated by matter; because things one in species and many in number agree in form and differ in matter. Therefore, if the possible intellect is multiplied numerically in different men, while being specifically one, then it must be individuated in this and that man by matter. But this individuation is not brought about by matter which is a part of the intellect itself, since in that case the intellect's receptivity would be of the same genus as that of prime matter, and it would receive individual forms; which is contrary to the nature of the intellect. It remains that the intellect is individuated by that matter which is the human body and of which the intellect is held to be the form. But every form individuated by matter of which that form is the act is a material form. For the being of a thing must stem from that to which it owes its individuation; since just as common principles belong to the essence of the species, so individuating principles belong to the essence of this individual thing. It therefore follows that the possible intellect is a material form, and, consequently, that it neither receives anything nor operates without a bodily organ. And this, too, is contrary to the nature of the possible intellect. Therefore, the possible intellect is not multiplied in different men, but is one for them all.[15]

Aquinas, who logically rejects the unity of the possible intellect, turns to the idea that the numerical plurality of rational souls (which, according to him, are those which survive after death) ultimately depends on their essential inclination towards their bodies. For Aquinas, one has to choose between the fact that the numerical diversity of souls is due to this natural inclination towards bodies, and the fact that the body is the ultimate cause of this diversity. He rejects the latter idea. Even though it is obvious that the soul belongs to one and the same species in different human beings, it is multiple as far as its number is concerned. This, however, does not lead to the conclusion that the same soul is at the same time a material form which depends in its existence and diversity on the body.[16]

To return to Cardano's *De immortalitate animorum*, Chap. 9 continues with a second set of arguments, which are powerful and direct – or almost direct – reasons in favour of the unity of the intellect. Some of them are Averroes's well-known arguments, others are logically derived from these, and a third kind are arguments from Aristotle which can be adduced to support the unity of the intellect. A clear example of the first group is the thesis which opens the set: 'There were also likely arguments (*argumenta verisimilitudinis*), like the one that the knowledge of the student seems to be the same as the one of the teacher, migrating from the one to

[14] See Siger of Brabant, *Quaestiones in tertium de anima*, ed. Bernardo Bazán (Louvain: Publications Universitaires; Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1972), q. 9, pp. 25–26.

[15] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, II, 75, n. 2; trans. Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke, and Charles J. O'Neil, 5 vols (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), II (trans. Anderson), pp. 232–233.

[16] Ibid.

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the other, because it is one thing. This does not happen with things perceived with the senses, for in these one sees in one way, another in another way, nor does that image pass from the one to the other.'[17] This argument can already be found in Themistius, and in terms which are certainly quite close to those used here.[18] And, one can of course also see the parallel in Averroes:

> When the material intellect is united (*copulatus*) with us insofar as it is actualised through the agent intellect, we then are united with the agent intellect. This disposition is called acquisition (*adeptio*) and the acquired intellect (*intellectus adeptus*), as we will see later. That way in which we posited the being of the material intellect solves all the questions resulting from our holding that the intellect is one and many (*quod intellectus est unus et multa*). For if the thing understood in me and in you (*res intellecta apud me et apud te*) were one in every way, it would happen that when I would know some intelligible (*aliquod intellectum*), you would also know it, and many other impossible things [would also follow]. If we assert it to be many, then it would happen that the thing understood in me and in you would be one in species (*in specie*) and two in individual [number] (*in individuo*). In this way the thing understood will have a thing understood and so it proceeds into infinity. Thus, it will be impossible for a student to learn from a teacher unless the knowledge which is in the teacher is a power generating and creating the knowledge (*virtus generans et creans scientiam*) which is in the student, in the way in which one fire generates another fire similar to it in species, which is impossible. That what is known is the same in the teacher and the student in this way caused Plato to believe that learning is recollection (*rememoratio*). Since, then, we asserted that the intelligible thing which is in me and in you is many in subject (*in subiecto*) insofar as it is true, namely, the forms of the imagination (*formae ymaginationi*), and one in the subject in virtue of which it is an existing intellect (namely, the material [intellect]), those questions are completely resolved.[19]

We have here one of the clearest expressions of the so-called theory of the 'double' subject. The material intellect is truly one for all human beings. However, because of the action of the *intentiones imaginatae*, which are raised to *intentiones intellectae* due to the intervention of the active intellect, it almost turns into a form of these and makes concrete human beings into individuals, even though it remains one with respect to the entire species. Here Averroes wants to solve two problems at the same time. On the one hand, we have the difficulty that, if there is only one intellect for the entire species, then all human beings would have to think the same thing at each moment, which is not possible. By introducing the idea that there are two kinds of 'subject', Averroes tries to preserve the unquestionable fact that 'thinking subjects' and 'thought objects' are different entities, without renouncing the idea of the material intellect's unity. On the other hand, the problem of the continuity of knowledge is solved, which accounts for the reality of the learning process.

Cardano addresses this point in the argument which we are examining here. That the existence of intellectual relationships between students and teachers has often

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[17] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 294; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 505b.

[18] Themistius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, ed. Richard Heinze, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, ed. H. Diels, 23 vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1882–1909), V, III (1890) pp. 103–104.

[19] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, pp. 411–412; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, pp. 328–329.

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been used as an argument to defend 'monopsychism' of an Averroist ilk is demonstrated by the fact that, characteristically, all its opponents mention it. Albertus Magnus does it, and Aquinas, too, mentions it on more than one occasion.[20] Cardano, however, connects the argument of the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student with the argument of the collective progress of human knowledge and the advances in the arts. These facts in themselves seem to point us to a superior force which is not under the influence of the vicissitudes of time.[21]

Other arguments which Cardano offers in favour of the unity of the intellect are related to the undoubtedly Aristotelian principle that the form is endowed with a level of greater perfection than matter, such that in the hierarchy of universal perfection immaterial substances occupy the first rank. Now, Aristotle himself in various places points out that a plurality of individuals within a species is possible only because of matter and that if the latter were absent, the species could only consist of one single individual.[22] In this context, it is worth remembering the historiographic debate concerning how Aristotle could save the immateriality of the unmoveable movers and their individuality at once. Philip Merlan argued that one of the most important difficulties in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is how to explain the existence of various unmoveable eternal movers, if plurality, as we have just seen, implies matter and each one of them is defined as a pure form. Merlan's response was that each unmoveable mover is unique within its species, i.e., that each one of them constitutes a different species of which it is its only member.[23] We have mentioned this interpretation because it is very similar to the following argument, which Cardano lists among those in favour of the unity of the intellect:

> Thus we can see that the species corresponding to the human beings is not more ample, or more valuable than the intelligences, for all human beings would have one intellect at once, and that would be more imperfect than the last intelligence, and it would be sufficient for all human beings, past, present and future.[24]

In Cardano's opinion, Averroes had identified the material intellect as the last and lowest intelligence; as such, it was the most imperfect of all celestial beings: 'For this reason it should be held according to Aristotle that the last of the separate intellects in the hierarchy is that material intellect.'[25] This then is how we should understand Cardano's words: the plurality which underlies the individuals does not imply a plurality of thinking intellects; otherwise, we would face the following

[20] See Albertus Magnus, *De unitate intellectus*, in *Opera omnia*, 40 vols, ed. Bernhard Geyer et al. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951-), XVII, i, p. 12; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, II, 75, n. 4; *De veritate*, q. 11, a. 1, arg. 6; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 117, a. 1 co.

[21] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 296; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 505b.

[22] See Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, VII, 8, 1034a7; XII, 2, 1069b30; XII, 8, 1074a33; *De anima*, II, 2, 414a25-27.

[23] Philip Merlan, *Studies in Epicurus and Aristotle* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1960), pp. 159 ff.

[24] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 296; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 505b.

[25] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima*, p. 442; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 354.

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serious difficulty: if each individual includes an intellective activity that was completely different, its condition would de facto be equal to that of the intellects. We would, thus, find here in the lower sphere we inhabit a plurality of intellects which is much larger than the plurality which exists in the supralunary world. Since this seems absurd, it is much better, suggests Cardano, to think that humankind as the human genus is represented by only one intellect, and that this intellect occupies the lower rank in the order of the intelligences. On the other hand, its nature as an intellect grants the material intellect as such an immortal character, which it would not have otherwise. However, this is the impersonal immortality which had been clearly rejected by both Albertus Magnus and Aquinas.

Another argument adduced by Cardano in favour of the unity of the intellect is based on the fact that Aristotle had not clearly rejected Anaxagoras's notion of the intellect (*nous*), but that he had criticised him only for his lack of clarity (*De anima*, I, 2, 404b2). Cardano also points out that Aristotle never referred to the mind (*nous*) in the plural, but only in the singular, which may suggest that he did not think there was more than one.[26] Finally, he concludes this set of arguments with a reason that is certainly taken from Averroes's commentary on *De anima*. This is how Cardano presents it, including his quotation from Averroes:

> But the greatest argument in support of the unity of the intellect is the one that Averroes puts forward in his commentary of the third book of *De anima*: 'If the intellects were many in number and one in species, also the intelligible forms would be many, but one in species; then, again, through the intellect it would be possible to abstract yet another universal form from them; and, again, the abstracted forms would differ in number, but agree in the species. As a result, there would be a regress to infinity in the intelligible forms of the same thing.'[27]

The plurality of material intellects presupposes an infinite multiplication of intelligibles. It is not easy to explain this question, which, as Averroes himself pointed out, had already been discussed by Avempace (Ibn Bājja).[28] The difficulty lies in solving a problem which includes different variables: on the one hand, the plurality of possible intellective acts; on the other, the unity of the thought intelligibles. The solution which, according to Averroes, Avempace presented, and which, again according to Averroes, was more appropriate than any other solution that had been given so far, was that the multiplicity affected the intelligibles only because of the imagined forms, which serve as substrates in each individual. This explains why the intelligible of the horse which is in me is different from that which exists in someone else. In this sense, the intelligible would not be a simple *quid*. We would rather have the proper entity of the intelligible, and below that a form of the intelligible form whereby there would be an analogy between the intelligible and the sensible things. A single thing is perceived by me and by you, even though the image of it which exists in me is different from the image of it which exists in you.

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[26] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 296; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506a.

[27] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 296; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506a. Cf. Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima*, p. 411.

[28] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima*, p. 490.

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As we have already pointed out, Averroes's solution introduces the notion of a 'double' subject for the intelligibles. The argument as is expressed in the *Commentarium magnum* was usually regarded as one of the most important moments in the *via Averrois* by Albertus Magnus and Aquinas.

After having presented these arguments, Cardano takes on a more critical attitude by highlighting the various argumentative discrepancies visible among the supporters of the unity of the intellect. First, he identifies the common assumption shared by the most prominent representatives of this view (Theophrastus, Themistius, Simplicius and Averroes), that is, the idea of the immortality and unity of both the active and the passive intellect for all individuals.[29] This is certainly the case with Averroes, provided that here by 'passive intellect' we understand the intellect that Alexander of Aphrodisias called the 'material intellect' (*intellectus materialis*). As for the other authors, however, a more detailed discussion is needed. Did Theophrastus, Themistius and Simplicius all believe in the eternity and unity of both intellects? Or is here Cardano's judgement perhaps overhasty? He certainly suggests that all of them agree on the unity and the immortality of the active and the passive intellects. At the same time, he indicates their differences when it comes to determining whether both intellects, or only one of them are really a part of us. Cardano lists the positions as follows: 'Some assume that only the passive intellect is a part of our soul, as Theophrastus seems to intimate; others neither the active, nor the passive, and this seems to be Averroes's opinion; others, finally, both the active and the passive, as is clearly held by Themistius.'[30] To recapitulate, we can say that Cardano attributes to Theophrastus the unity and immortality of both intellects (active and passive) and the idea that only the passive intellect can be properly said to be human. To Themistius, he assigns the view that the characters of unity, immortality and humanity belong to both intellects. To Simplicius he attributes the thesis of the unity and immortality of both intellects (without saying whether the condition of both intellects is human or transcendent). To Averroes, finally, he attributes the unity and immortality of the two intellects, which do not properly belong to human beings. This diversity of opinions, which also manifests itself in the distinction between the two intellects, helps Cardano to criticise severely the lack of consistence among those who defend the unity of the intellect.

Concerning Theophrastus, as Cardano himself points out, everything we know about him in this respect is derived from Themistius's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*.[31] That a certain agreement existed between them is suggested by the fact

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[29] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 297; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506a.

[30] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, pp. 297–298; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506a.

[31] On this question, see Edmond Barbotin, *La théorie aristotélicienne de l'intellect d'après Théophraste* (Louvain and Paris: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1954) and Dimitri Gutas, 'Averroes on Theophrastus, though Themistius', in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126–1198)*, eds Gerhard Endress and Jan A. Aertsen, with the assistance of Klaus Braun (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 125–144.

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that Themistius formulated his own opinion on the basis of statements extracted from him. An example can be found in the following fragment:

> In also addressing the distinctions drawn by Aristotle regarding the productive intellect, he says, 'What must be investigated is our saying that in the whole of nature one thing is like matter, and is in potentiality, while another is causative and productive;' and that 'That which produces [an affection] is always more valuable than that which is affected, and the first principle [more valuable] than the matter.' While accepting this, he still works through problems: 'What, then, are these two natures? And what furthermore is the substrate for, and conjoint partner of, the productive [intellect]? For the intellect is in a way mixed out of the productive and potential [intellects]. So if the [intellect] that moves is naturally cognate [with the soul], it would also have [been so] instantaneously and perpetually. But if [the intellect that moves] is a later [development], with what, and how, does it come into existence? It seems that if indeed it is also imperishable, it is a substance that is not created. Yet if it exists in [the soul], why not perpetually? Why is there loss of memory, confusion and falsity? It may be because of the mixture [with the passive intellect].' From all this it is clear that we are not inappropriately assuming that one intellect is passive and perishable, which [Theophrastus and Aristotle] also call 'common' and 'inseparable from the body' (it is mixture with *this* [intellect] that Theophrastus says causes loss of memory and confusion [for the productive intellect]); and that another [intellect] is like a combination from the potential and actual [intellects], which they posit as separate from the body, imperishable, and uncreated. These intellects are natures that in different ways are one as well as two, for what [is combined] from matter and form is one.[32]

Obviously for Theophrastus, making mistakes and forgetting are due to an impoverishment of its nature which the active intellect suffers when it mixes with the passive intellect. With this passage from Themistius in mind, we can understand Cardano's statement about Theophrastus's opinion that the passive intellect was inherently part of the soul while the active intellect had an external origin. This point is even clearer in the following passage, when Themistius refers to Aristotle's *nous thyrathen* (i.e., the intellect that 'comes from outside'), and reports another passage from Theophrastus:

> But what affection [is produced] on an incorporeal [object] by an incorporeal [object]? What kind of change [is this]? And is the source [of the change] from the object or from the [intellect] itself? Because [the intellect] is affected, it would seem to be from the object (for nothing that is affected is so from itself). Yet because the intellect is the source of all things, and thinking is in its power, unlike the senses, [the source of the change would seem to be] from within itself. But perhaps this too would seem absurd if the [potential] intellect has the nature of matter by being [in actuality] nothing, yet potentially all things.[33]

Here we can notice that the text does not make any difference between the active intellect and the potential intellect. Themistius thus presents Theophrastus as always referring to the intellect in a broad sense (*nous*) without making any distinction. In his text, however, Theophrastus defends the character of the intellect as being intrinsic to the soul, and since he wants to attribute to it an almost double nature

[32] Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 108, 18–34; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, pp. 133–134.

[33] Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 107, 30–108, 7; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 133.

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(that of receiving intelligible objects and being affected by them, a characteristic that it shares with the senses, and that of being the principle of its own intellective activity, which instead separates it from the senses), we could say that this double intellective tendency, active and passive, is rooted in the human soul.

This coincides only in part with what Cardano says about Theophrastus. Cardano attributes to him the intrinsic character of the potential intellect and the external character of the active intellect. On the basis of the text quoted above, we can say that Theophrastus seems to have considered both intellects, or better, both faces of the human intellect, as being inherent to the soul. Another question is whether to look at Theophrastus, as Cardano does, as one of the advocates of the unity of the intellect, or even more, as we can see in the passage under consideration here, as someone who defends the unity of both the active and the passive intellects. In this case, Cardano's source would have been a different one, probably Averroes himself, from whose works the American scholar W.W. Fortenbaugh has extracted a number of fragments belonging to Theophrastus's lost treatise.[34] When, for example, Averroes discusses the nature of the material intellect, he states:

> Hence Aristotle, when he found the disposition (*praeparatio)* which is in the intellect to be diverse from the others, judged in a precise way that the nature which is a subject for it differs from the other disposed natures (*naturae preparatae*). What is proper to that subject of disposition is that there is in it none of the intentions intelligible in potency or in act. Hence it was necessary that it not be a body nor a form in a body. And since it is not a body, nor a power in a body, it will also not be the forms of the imagination (*formae ymaginationis*), for those are powers in bodies (*virtutes in corporibus*) and they are intentions intelligible in potency (*intentiones intellecte in potentia*). Since the subject of that disposition is neither a form of the imagination nor a mixture of elements, as Alexander intended, nor can we say that some disposition is stripped from a subject, we rightly see that Theophrastus, Themistius, Nicolaus, and others among the ancient Peripatetics hold faster to the demonstration of Aristotle and preserve his words to a greater degree. For since they attend to the accounts and words of Aristotle, none could bring these to bear upon the disposition itself alone nor upon the thing subject to the disposition [as] if we had asserted it to be a power in a body, while saying that it is simple, separate, impassible, and unmixed with the body. If that were not the opinion of Aristotle, it would be necessary that it be held that it is the true opinion.[35]

Judging from this text, it is obvious that Averroes had put Theophrastus (alongside Themistius) in the domain of his interpretation of Aristotle's thought. They both share the same conception of the separate material intellect which is different from the soul insofar as it does not have any connection with the body and its faculties, since it is neither a body nor a form which inhabits a body. It is because of explanations such as this one provided by Averroes that Themistius and Theophrastus were later included among the authors who had defended the unity of the intellect. This tradition, as we have seen, is echoed by Cardano. The problem with Theophrastus is that – according to the texts already examined – he seems to maintain both the

[34] See *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought, and Influence*, ed. William W. Fortenbaugh, Pamela M. Huby, Robert W. Sharples and Dimitri Gutas, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

[35] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima*, p. 432; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 345.

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transcendence and the immanence of at least the active principle of our intellect. Such a principle is transcendent insofar as Aristotle had established with sufficient clarity that its provenance was external and that he had insisted (chapter 5 of *De anima* III is unambiguous in this respect) on its autonomous and impassive character. But the active principle of the intellect is also immanent, since the fact that it permeates the outside points to the fact that it truly exists in the human being. As we have stated concerning the texts mentioned above, Theophrastus considered these two intellects to be mixed. This also means, as we have said, that the active principle is immanent. No great exegetic effort is needed in order to understand that, for this disciple of Aristotle, such an active principle plays a role from the very beginning of each individual's life, in the sense that the act of thinking is in the end immanent and transcendent. It takes place in an individual, but ultimately has a superior origin and is probably indivisible. In this sense, it would be correct to list Theophrastus among those who, one way or another, defended a kind of collective noetics – at least partly, insofar as it refers to the active principle of understanding, or, if one wishes, the active intellect.

At any rate, Themistius's claim that there are three intellects is unambiguous and he clearly describes the role that each one plays in the act of human thinking. In this sense, one can say that Cardano's account of Themistius's position is correct, although some caveats are in order. In Cardano's opinion, Themistius had anticipated the doctrine of the unity of the intellect, had claimed that such unity held true for both the active and the passive intellect, and, finally, had maintained that both intellects were part of the human soul. Given these premises, Cardano could interpret Themistius as opposed to Averroes and, in a narrower context, to Alexander, who had identified the active intellect with God. From very early on, Themistius had certainly been praised for the emphasis he had placed on the human character of the active intellect[36] and – as a consequence – for his unwillingness to identify the active intellect with the Aristotelian deity. There is no doubt that this is what Cardano had in mind when he attributed to Themistius the notion that all intellects which participate in understanding share the character of the human soul. It is therefore obvious that Themistius's theory of the intellect is firmly placed in the domain of human psychology. The features of this psychology are as follows: instead of assimilating the activity of the intellect described in *De anima* III, 5 (i.e., the active intellect) to God's activity as defined in book 12 of *Metaphysics* – as done by Alexander –, Themistius speaks rather of a connection (like something composed of matter and form) of the active intellect and the potential intellect, the latter being ontologically inferior to the former. These two intellects are both to be distinguished from the third intellect (the passive intellect), which is associated with the functions of memory, emotion and discursive reasoning. This last intellect is the one that cannot be separated from the body, whereas the potential intellect can be separated from it, even though to a lesser degree than the active intellect (the productive intellect), due to its closer relationship

[36] See Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 103, 4–5, 13; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 129.

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with the soul. The separable character of the potential intellect as well as its status as the matter of the productive intellect are crucial for understanding Themistius's original contribution to the question. This intellect is not merely a precondition for the intellectual development of the mind, the condition appropriate for the production of concepts, but it is also the 'forerunner' of the productive intellect in the soul, i.e., that which prepares the soul for the kind of thinking which the active intellect makes possible.[37] What this means is that the relationship between the productive intellect and the individual can be represented as a self-fulfilling form. This is apparent when he affirms that the essence of personal identity is the intellect *in actu*, and also in the interchangeable use of the terms 'we' and 'productive intellect.'[38] On the other hand, in a passage based on Aristotelian quotations, Themistius develops a point of view concerning personal identity according to which after death, 'we', insofar as we are productive intellect, do not remember any connection with the passive intellect.[39] The notion of an individual thinking subject thus vanishes in a theory of the intellect in which, as Cardano states, the mind ends up having a collective nature, a nature which belongs to the active as well as to the potential intellects (only the third intellect, the passive intellect, perishes). What Cardano says here about Themistius is thus clearly justified.[40] Furthermore, Themistius confirms (indeed, through Alexander) the existence of the first and unique intellect, through which we can account for the existence of common notions that are valid for all human beings, the possibility of communication, and, through that, of teaching:

> The intellect that illuminates in a primary sense is one, while those that are illuminated and that illuminate are, just like light, more than one. For while the sun is one, you could speak of light as in a sense divided among the organs of sight.[41]

As far as Simplicius is concerned, whom Cardano also mentions as one of the advocates of the unity of the intellect,[42] his treatment of the intellective activity of human beings is not very different from what we have just said about Themistius, although the background of the Simplicius's philosophy is more clearly shaped by Neoplatonic ideas. Thus, in a Plotinian manner, he situates the soul – or, more specifically, intellection as its more excellent faculty – in the middle between mortality and immortality, perishable diversity and eternal unity:

> The cause is the procession through intermediates from the highest entities to the lowest, so that there should be no empty space. This is so since it is necessary that the intermediates

[37] See Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 105, 30–34; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 131.

[38] See Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 100, 37–101,1; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 125.

[39] See Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 101, 1–4; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 126.

[40] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 297; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506a.

[41] Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 105, 30–34; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 131.

[42] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 297; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506a.

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> are superior to the lowest entities as being more powerful and nearer to the things that exist primarily. So the human soul is intermediate, or rather the reason of this kind of soul, which he [i.e., Aristotle] here calls intellect, intermediate between things that are indivisible and divided, between those that are always in the same condition and those which change entirely, and between those that are entirely their own and those that exist in something else, because it transcends the latter and does not attain the state of the former: in so far as it is on a higher level than things which are in another, it too is immaterial, but in so far as it does not attain the state of the entities which are highest and remain in themselves, it neither always thinks simply nor is it thought in the pure sense.[43]

From Simplicius's point of view, the question is thus to understand which nature prevails in the human soul (or at least, in its most excellent part, the intellect), whether that of the inferior beings or that of the superior ones. Plotinus, who on this matter was clearly followed by Porphyry, maintained the transcendence of our intellect. In later forms of Neoplatonism, however, it was argued that, because of the intermediary nature of human intellection as well as its imperfection, the superior part of the soul has to be reconciled with the other parts.[44] Along the same lines as Themistius, Simplicius defended the autonomy of the human intellect and denied that its active element was outside of the human soul. In his commentary on *De anima*, he declared that 'the question' was only about 'our soul'. And he went on to say:

> In our soul there is not only what is acted on, but also what acts, the principle and cause of the things that happen. Further, what acts in the soul is able to think itself and unites its activity indivisibly with its substance. The principle and cause of the things that happen, and what is activity in its substance, is separable and simple. What is separable and simple belongs to itself and is not in anything other. This sort of thing cannot admit its opposite, lack of life and lack of substance (it will never admit the contrary in itself, nor in anything else, since it belongs only to itself). So what acts in the soul, being unable to admit death and destruction, turns out to be necessarily immortal and indestructible, not primarily because of its inability to admit them, but, as has been said, on account of the fact that in its inclination to the outside it sources secondary substances and faculties.[45]

Insofar as there is something in the human soul which has a superior nature, the soul is immortal like the higher substances, and in a way it has the character of something indivisible. In this sense, one could include Simplicius among the interpreters who defended a certain unity of the intellect, including the immanent character of the active principle. Although Simplicius maintained that the potential or material character of the intellect had a perishable nature, what he meant by that was that the potential intellect *qua* potential intellect is perishable to the extent that, while advancing towards perfection, it gradually abandons the level of potentiality

[43] Simplicius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima commentaria*, ed. Michael Hayduck, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, ed. H. Diels, 23 vols (Berlin: Reimer, 1882–1909), XI (1882), p. 238, 5–13; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, *3.1-5*, trans. H. J. Blumenthal (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 104.

[44] Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. Ernst Diehl, 3 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1906), III, p. 333, 29 and ff.

[45] Simplicius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima commentaria*, p. 247, 3–13; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, *3.1-5*, p. 116.

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to acquire a higher condition, i.e., the immortal life of the active intellect. In this form of self-actualisation, as also presented by Themistius, there is no explicit difference between the active and the passive principle of the human intellect. It is probably for this reason that Cardano attributed to both Themistius and Simplicius the idea that there is no actual distinction between the active and the potential intellect.[46]

[AU2] As for Cardano's own remarks on the various proofs in favour of the unity of the intellect, it should be pointed out that he refers to Aquinas and Pomponazzi to distance himself from Averroes's position. As we have already said, by and large, Cardano accepted Aquinas's and Pomponazzi's views on the matter. Nevertheless, he also thought it appropriate to add some new observations.

The first point he made is that – within certain limits and qualifications – he did not have conceptual objections to some of the fundamental statements of Averroism:

> By all means, if we speak of the unity of the intellect in terms of nature, origin and essence, I grant this meaning to them, for human beings do not differ among them any more than horses or dogs do. The origin of all intellects seems to be the same for all, for human beings, from very early on, are endowed with the same principles, as in all swallows there is the same ability to build a nest.[47]

Here Cardano agrees with the Averroists that one has to assume a certain level of unity in the species humankind. However, the advocates of the intellect's unity go beyond this assumption and here is where Cardano cannot agree with them any longer. First of all, he states that they maintain the unity of the potential intellect and support this position, among other things, by referring to the apparent unity of science. In this sense, Cardano agrees that the knowledge which is in the mathematician Apollonius of Perga and the one which could be in himself are the same despite any difference of time that may separate the two individuals. The continuity of knowledge, Cardano continues, is only an accident of the individual intellect and one can only regard it as one single thing from an accidental point of view. What is accidental is subject to change, and this fact goes against its identity as a unique and continuous reality. It is well known that science is affected by changes in time and by the diversity of individuals who devote themselves to such an activity. Science advances, suffers setbacks and even disappears. No independent, substantial entity would undergo such changes. If therefore the unity of the passive intellect is represented by the unity of knowledge, then such unity is to be rejected because the plurality of individuals prevails and this plurality turns itself into a diversity of potential intellects. As a result, the alleged unity of science is purely circumstantial and depends on the way in which we, as human beings, understand reality, and it is not the expression of a substantial being. This argument concerning the unity of science is intimately related to the possibility of learning or transferring knowledge from a teacher to his or her student. Thomas Aquinas refuted this theory by referring

[46] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 301; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506b.

[47] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 301; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 506b.

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to a transitive view of the process of intellection. Unity, he argued, exists in the origin – i.e., in the object of knowledge – and not at the end – i.e., in the intellect – of such a process:

> Therefore, there is one thing that is understood by me and you, but it is understood by means of one thing by me and by means of another by you, that is, by different intelligible species, and my understanding differs from yours and my intellect differs from yours. Hence, Aristotle in the *Categories* says that knowledge is singular with respect to its subject: 'the individual knowledge of grammar is in a subject, the soul, but is not said of any subject.' Hence, when my intellect understands itself to understand, it understands some singular activity; when however, it understands understanding simply, it understands something universal. It is not singularity that is repugnant to intelligibility, but materiality; thus, since they are immaterial singulars, as was said of separate substances above, nothing prevents such singulars from being understood.[48]

On the other hand, Cardano believes that it is pointless to think about the unity of the potential intellect since the most important reason for considering its unity is to avoid the (infinite) multiplicity of forms after death, but 'if that intellect is perishable, what is the point of making it one?' [49] Therefore, if one eliminates the possibility of immortality regarding the potential intellect, there is no disadvantage involved in accepting its plurality regarding the subjects of which it represents the form.[50] We can see here that Cardano joins the ranks of those who believe in the mortality of the passive intellect, a position which he has extensively developed in the previous chapters of *De immortalitate*. The passive intellect is the real form of the human being, and following the generic definition which he attributes to the soul based on book 2 of Aristotle's *De anima*, its dissolution can only be thought of as happening simultaneously with that of the entire composite.

After having dealt with the unity of the passive intellect, Cardano turns to that of the active intellect. Here, too, he is not favourably disposed towards the Averroist point of view. The main thrust of Cardano's argument is that one cannot possibly consider the intellect as one, if it is compared to light, for when we rely on the simile of the light of the sun which is at the same time in the eyes of many, then inevitably a number of problems arise. The first one is that the active intellect would not be a substance, for 'the likeness (*similitudo*) of a substance is not a substance.' The intellect, though, Cardano continues, 'is a substance, as we have demonstrated.'[51] For Cardano, however, the possibility of personal immortality can only be derived from assuming that the active intellect is an independent substance. If the comparison refers to the image of the light which is in the eyes, we have to admit the plurality of active intellects. The image which is in my eye is different from that which is in the eye of another person; therefore, the active intellects, like the images, are subject to

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[48] Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, in *Aquinas against the Averroists: On There Being Only One Intellect*, ed. Ralph McInerny (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 133. See Aristotle, *Categories*, 2, 1a25-27.

[49] Cardano, *De immortalitate animorum*, p. 302; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 507a.

[50] Ibid.: 'Nam formas materia exortas pro subiectis compositis numerare nullum est incoveniens.'

[51] Ibid.

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plurality, even though, like the images, they have a common source. Furthermore, there are other difficulties involved in identifying the active intellect with light. Is it by any chance the light itself which sees? This would imply that knowledge is not actually in us and that the light is not the medium through which our eye sees, as one should understand it, but that which itself sees. Yet another issue, however, is, according to Cardano, whether the image of the light (which is in us) is a substance:

> If light and its image are both substance, our search ends here, for we do not reject, nor do we intend to reject the thesis that all intellective souls arise from and depend on one principal substance.[52]

This point of view can be accepted if it is based on the assumption that there is a plurality of such substances. Otherwise, if one maintains the unity of the origin, the result is a series of unacceptable conclusions. All human beings would be one and we would all know (or not know) the same all the time. Furthermore, if this intellective substance is different from us, so that the unity is preserved in spite of the diversity of the underlying subjects, then our understanding would not be our understanding and the unity of the individual would be broken up. This last aspect is certainly something which seems to be in opposition with Cardano's own concept of the active intellect as a substance which is independent of the human soul. For this reason, he postpones the discussion of this aspect.

The starting point for the comparison of the active intellect with light can be found in chapter 5, book 3 of Aristotle's *De anima*. The analogy had already been used by Plato, so that Themistius was able to establish a parallel between the comparison as it appears in Aristotle and the one that can be found in book 6 of Plato's *Republic*. As already noticed,[53] Themistius indicates the existence of a first, illuminating intellect, and of many intellects which are at the same time illuminated by it and illuminate themselves through their corresponding passive intellects:

> For while the sun is one, you could speak of light as in a sense divided among the organs of sight. That is why Aristotle introduced as a comparison not the sun but [its derivative] light, whereas Plato [introduced] the sun [itself], in that he makes it analogous to the good.[54]

Eager to explain the function of the *nous poeietikos*, Aristotle had certainly established an analogy between this intellect and the light, comparing the former with the function that the latter fulfils in the act of vision. Light appears as the third element which turns out to be indispensable between the faculty of vision and the perceived object. Unfortunately, Aristotle did not develop this analogy in any detail and did not explain several aspects of it. (Such an explanation, no doubt, would have made many later interpretations redundant.) Obviously, light does not carry in itself the forms of the colours, the vision of which it makes possible. It would, however,

[52] Ibid., p. 303; *Opera omnia*, II, p. 507a.

[53] See p. @@ and n. @@.

[54] Themistius, *In Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, p. 103, 32–34; Id., *On Aristotle's* On the Soul, p. 129.

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be absurd to limit the active intellect to a simple intermediary between the thing which is understood and the understanding subject. The comparison with light does not allow us to explain in an adequate manner the truly creative aspect of the active intellect. Not only does the intellect turn potential intelligibles into intelligibles in actuality; it also generates them, a role which is not reflected in the relationship between the light and the colours.[55] What, at any rate, interests us here is that the comparison of the active intellect with light had led to a great controversy when it came to determining whether or not the active intellect is immanent to the human soul, and, furthermore, whether its character is one or diverse with respect to the underlying subjects. Cardano participated in this debate, and the passage quoted above is evidence of his involvement in the question. It cannot be denied that Aristotle used a fairly laconic style in his famous chapter 5. Expanding on the analogy of the light as it was presented in that chapter, commentators of all times have asked themselves whether the principle Aristotle described as the active intellect is a transcendent nature that is one for all humankind, or whether it is something which belongs to the specific constitution of individual human beings. The beginning of the chapter seems to indicate that this active principle is in the soul.[56] However, it is also the case that the attributes which Aristotle assigned to it makes one think of a certain kind of transcendence – separable, unaffected, unmixed, always *in actu* – and many commentators have claimed that, from a purely Aristotelian point of view, these attributes can only suggest that we are dealing with a transcendent principle of the human soul. Alexander of Aphrodisias was a leading representative of this interpretation, and there seems to be no way around the reasoning which led him to identifying it with the first cause, or, as one should say, the God described in book 12 of the *Metaphysics*. For him, that which has the highest degree of a certain property is the reason for that property to be present in other things, and this is also the case with light. It has the highest degree of visibility and therefore is the cause of the visibility of the objects. Likewise, that which has the highest degree of intelligibility is the cause of other things being intelligible. Such reality can only be the active intellect. If one considers this intellect the cause of the existence of all other things, as well as separable and unaffected, and if one also

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[55] Here I would like to mention an alternative interpretation that can be traced back to Thomas Aquinas, in his commentary upon this passage from book 3 of *De anima*. For Aquinas, it is not necessary that the active intellect contains the intelligibles or that it be their creator before they take shape in the material or potential intellect. This would be a contradiction; for, if the active intellect possessed in itself the determination of all the intelligibles, the material intellect would have no need to conceive and abstract from those intelligibles the imaginative forms that come from the senses. They would be actualised in the material intellect with the mere presence of the agent intellect. However, since the intelligibles can only be obtained through a process of abstraction that requires the availability of images, it is better – so Aquinas argues – to consider the intellect as a kind of immaterial power that makes other beings similar to it, i.e., immaterial. This is what is meant by the active intellect converting the potential into actualised intelligibles. See Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaire du traité de l'âme d'Aristote*, ed. Jean-Marie Vernier (Paris: Vrin, 1999), p. 357.

[56] Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 5, 430a10-14.

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assumes that that which is separable is that which really is, one reaches the conclusion, incontrovertible for Alexander, that this reality is identical with the first cause.[57] Others, however, have tried to maintain a certain balance between both positions in order to make the immanent character of the active intellect somehow compatible with its transcendent character – a position which, as we have seen, Theophrastus seems to have held. In a similar manner, Themistius tried to save the dichotomy by distinguishing the active intellects (illuminated and illuminating), which are located in the human soul, and the other active intellect (which is only illuminating), which has a completely transcendent and unique reality.

As for Averroes's interpretation of the Aristotelian analogy between light and the process of intellection, here we can also find what one might consider the genuine element in his own reading of the Aristotelian theory of the intellect:

> It is as if [Aristotle] says: and the way which forced us to suppose the agent intellect is the same as the way on account of which sight needs light. For just as sight is not moved by colours except when they are in act, which is not realised unless light is present since it is what draws them from potency into act, so too the imagined intentions (*intentiones ymaginate*) do not move the material intellect except when the intelligibles are in act (*nisi quando fuerint intellecte in actu*), because it is not actualised by these unless something else is present, namely, the intellect in act. It was necessary to ascribe these two activities to the soul in us, namely, to receive the intelligible (*recipere intellectum*) and to make it (*facere eum*), although the agent and the recipient are eternal substances, on account of the fact that these two activities are reduced to our will, namely, to abstract intelligibles and to understand them.[58]

This text clearly suggests that Averroes's thought is more complex and deserves a more detailed discussion than what Cardano, for example, offers. The latter argues that, if we speak about the active intellect as a unique reality for all humankind, and at the same time consider it a formal part of each individual, we will have to make absurd claims such as that we all know or do not know the same at the same time, or that we are all really one single human being, or that there cannot be several geometers or architects. These objections, however, had already been discussed by Averroes himself, who responded to them, as can be seen from the text we have just quoted. Averroes tried to integrate the incontrovertible experience that we are individuals who think with the attribution of the characters of eternity and substantiality to both intellects. Averroes acknowledged that our will determines our intellection and therefore, in addition to the active and the material intellects, he referred to a third intellect, the acquired (*adeptus*) intellect, which represents the integration of the other two intellects in the individual. As is known, the crux of the matter here is that the active intellect does not act upon the material intellect, but upon the sensible images which are present in the imagination. Through the active intellect, the sensible images, which are intelligible in potentiality, turn into intelligibles in actuality

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[57] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima*, in *Praeter commentaria scripta minora*, ed. Ivo Bruns (Berlin: Reimer, 1887–1892), p. 89, 17–19.

[58] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, p. 439; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, p. 345.

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and become property of the potential intellect. This cannot be the form of the individual, since otherwise it would have to be individualised through matter and it would lose the character of pure potentiality that Aristotle attributes to it.[59] Therefore, from this situation, i.e., from the union of the active intellect with the sensible images, from their actualisation as intelligibles and their reception in the material intellect, the acquired intellect arises which belongs to the thinking subject. Because of this individual realisation, one can affirm that the intellective act is the property of a subject, although, among its basic elements, it is only the sensible images – a necessary condition for the intellective process that takes place in the human mind – which, strictly speaking, have an individual origin.

In his analysis of Averroes's solution, Cardano is not convinced that the active intellect understood as the form of the whole species can still safeguard the form of the individual thinking being. If the active intellect is not our form and the ultimate cause of understanding, how can we then speak properly of *our* intellective act? In *De unitate intellectus* (3, 60–66), Aquinas had argued in a way that is not very different from Cardano, even though his discussion was much more detailed. He took the following thesis as his starting point: The intellect, being a faculty of the soul, has to be considered a form of the body; as such, it has to exist since the first moment of its coming into being; however, none of this can be argued if neither the active intellect (the active principle of intellection), nor the material or potential intellect (which receives the intelligibles), are part of the structure of the human being. Averroes had suggested that the connection of the active intellect with the individual imaginative species gives the individual a form which is superior to that which he had at the beginning, which is nothing else than the sensitive soul. In what sense can the active intellect then be seen as the form of the individual? From the point of view of the individual, the acquired intellect, i.e., the individual crystallisation of the active and the passive intellects which happens through the intermediation of the sensible images, constitutes the true form of the compound and as such it is the highest form of the concrete human being and of his soul. Now, we should not forget that the active intellect is the form of the acquired intellect, insofar as it has made possible the conversion of the potential intelligibles (the imaginative forms) into intelligibles *in actu*. In this sense, we can show that in a way the active intellect is the form of the individual. The theory is certainly not simple, but perhaps Averroes's own words can be of some help:

> We, therefore, have already found the way in which it is possible for that intellect [i.e., the agent intellect] to be conjoined with us (*continuetur nobiscum*) in the end and the reason why it is not united with us in the beginning (*non copulatur nobiscum in principio*). For when this has been asserted, it will necessarily happen that the intellect which is in us in act

[59] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, p. 385: 'ista substantia que dicitur intellectus materialis nullam habet in sui natura de formis materialibus istis. Et quia forme materiales sunt aut corpus aut forme in corpore, manifestum est quod ista substantia que dicitur intellectus materialis neque est corpus neque forma in corpore; est igitur non mixtum cum materia omnino.'

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> be composed of theoretical intelligibles (*intellecta speculativa*) and the agent intellect in such a way that the agent intellect is as it were the form of the theoretical intelligibles and the theoretical intelligibles are as it were matter. In this way we will be able to generate intelligibles when we wish. For because that in virtue of which something carries out its proper activity is the form, while we carry out our proper activity in virtue of the agent intellect, it is necessary that the agent intellect be form in us. There is no way in which the form is generated in us except that. For when the theoretical intelligibles are united with us through forms of the imagination (*cum intellecta speculativa copulantur nobiscum per formas ymaginabiles*) and the agent intellect is united with the theoretical intelligibles (for that which apprehends [theoretical intelligible] is the same, namely, the material intellect), it is necessary that the agent intellect be united with us through the conjoining of the theoretical intelligibles.[60]

One of the objections which can be raised against such a position is presented by Aquinas, with whom Cardano agrees here: the perfection of the human being does not occur of course in the moment of coming into being, as one would think, but only when the senses have been developed. From this point onwards, the connection between the active intellect and the concrete individual is possible. If, however, the active intellect as the individual form does not originate with the beginning of generation, it is obvious that to study the form is not a task connected with physics, but rather with metaphysics. In this case, as Cardano points out (agreeing not only with Aquinas, but also with Pomponazzi) Averroes seems to contradict Aristotle's words, since in book 12 of the *Metaphysics* the human soul never appears among the separate and eternal substances which Aristotle discusses there. Neither does he speak about the separate intellects in *De anima*. In highlighting the tensions between the psychological and cosmological components in Averroes's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the intellect, Cardano proved to be abreast of the ongoing debate over the nature of the soul and able to contribute to the discussion with original ideas and arguments.

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[60] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, pp. 499–500; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, pp. 398–399.

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Author Queries

Chapter No.: 8 0001629569

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	In this Chapter, we have considered all the Chapter cross references (Chapters 11, 9 etc.) belong to this book and set those "Chap." as per the style. Please check if this is OK.	
AU2	*** has been deleted before the para of the sentence "As for Cardano's own remarks on the various …" Please confirm.	

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Chapter 9
Phantasms of Reason and Shadows of Matter: Averroes's Notion of the Imagination and Its Renaissance Interpreters

Guido Giglioni

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The Imagination and Averroes's Inconceivables

A fundamental principle of Aristotle's philosophy, appropriated and originally developed by Averroes, is that intelligibles lie *in* matter in a condition of virtual existence.[1] This assumption presupposes a correspondence between reality (*esse reale*) and its apprehended forms (*esse intentionale*) which allows the intellect to abstract the intelligibles from the representations of the senses after they have been apprehended by the imagination. The activity of the intellect – i.e., the abstraction of intelligible reality from its condition of potential existence – is what Aristotle and his interpreters meant by thinking activity. In this context, intellects in their purest form are unremitting 'actualisers' of potential intelligibility. From sense perception – indeed from the discerning powers underlying the vital faculties of animate bodies – to the highest form of knowledge in which the intellect understands itself (*noesis noeseos*), each level of actuality corresponds to a level of apprehension within the incessant production of intelligible knowledge that pervades the universe.

[1] In the course of this chapter, I will use a number of words that took on specific technical meanings in the philosophical literature of the Middle Ages. It is worth reviewing them briefly: *esse reale* (reality insofar as it is in itself), *esse intentionale* (reality insofar as it is apprehended), *intentio* (apprehension), *phantasma* (representation of the imagination), *cogitativa* (the faculty of individual rationality), *obiective* (considered under the aspect of representations), *subiective* (considered under the aspect of substrata, i.e., physical subjects to be informed by their respective forms), *forma informans* (form as an actualising principle that inheres in the subject to be informed), *forma assistens* (form as an active principle that remains separate from the subject to be informed).

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To put it succinctly, in Averroes's cosmos animals *imagine*, individual human beings *cogitate*, humankind as a whole *thinks* and the heavenly intelligences *intuit* and *understand themselves*. These stages in the process of apprehension constitute real differences, and yet they postulate a continuity of intelligible activity that defines every single aspect of reality in the universe, on both a sublunary and supralunary level. In the continuum of rational life, the imagination mediates between the two extremes of matter and the intellect. In this, it represents a principle of universal fungibility, through which exchanges of knowledge constantly occur among the various parts of the universe.

In this chapter, I will argue that in Averroes's philosophy the imagination fulfils specific noetic, cosmological and psychological functions: it bridges the gap between the human mind and the astral intelligences (noetics), it accounts for exchanges of energy and knowledge between supralunary and sublunary bodies (cosmology) and it is the channel through which the human mind communicates with the other faculties of the soul (psychology). Most of all, the imagination plays a characteristically delicate role in Averroes's philosophy, in that it mediates between nature and culture: the imagination – in the form of dialectical, rhetorical, poetic, narrative and exegetic transactions – bridges the gap that separates the level of universal and necessary knowledge from that of sensible, individual and popular representations. This means that, in abstracting the *intentiones* of meaning from the matter of the universe, an apprehensive power manifests itself in a variety of forms throughout the ladders of the sublunary and supralunary worlds, from the most elementary faculties of vital discernment active in plants and bodily organs to the actualising power of the intellect operating in the celestial spheres. This phenomenon does not occur only in nature. The same holds true for human cultures, which can be seen as different arenas in which alternative forms of reasoning confront each other and constantly need to be reconciled by applying varying standards of proof depending on the circumstances.

Imaginatively bold, Averroes's philosophy and Averroism have long taxed the philosophical imagination with a series of counterintuitive views originating from a peculiar way of understanding the relationship between knowledge, the intellect and reality. Jacopo Zabarella, professor of logic and natural philosophy at the University of Padua from 1564 to 1589 (the year of his death), was not the first and only philosopher to charge Averroes with a number of inconceivable views (*inexcogitabilia*) regarding the nature of thought.[2] The following are some of the *inconceivables* that were commonly associated with Averroes's doctrine of the mind: If, in the great scheme of things, at the highest level of intellective knowledge, the understanding subject (*intellectus*), the understood things (*intellecta*) and the activity of understanding (*intelligere*) converge into one reality, why should the intellect need the object of knowledge to be synthesised by the imagination? (Which, by the way, is the fulcrum of Pietro Pomponazzi's demonstration of the mortality of the soul: by requiring an object in the form of the imagination, human thinking necessarily depends on the body). Connected to this question

[2] Jacopo Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, in *De rebus naturalibus* (Frankfurt: Lazar Zetzner 1607), c. 964C.

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is a series of related *inexcogitabilia*: What is the point of the external world? Why should the soul be united to the body? Is there any room for an individual self? And if the intellect transcends the cogitative functions of the individual self, what does distinguish the cognitive powers of human animals from other non-human animals? They all imagine and, perhaps, cogitate.

Imagination as Apprehensive Intentionality

The Renaissance can be described as the golden age of the imagination given the level of pervasiveness and sophistication that characterised the debate on the nature of the images and the imagination at the time.[3] During this period, a question of philosophical exegesis that acted as a powerful catalyst for discussions about the nature of the imagination revolved around a well-known passage from Aristotle's *De anima* (I, 1, 403a): 'possibly thinking is an exception. But if this too is a kind of imagination, or at least is dependent upon the imagination, even this cannot exist apart from the body.'[4] This is the key locus where Aristotle is debating whether the human mind can or cannot think without relying on the representative material provided by the imagination. In his Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, Averroes had recalled the crux of the Aristotelian conundrum: 'it is not so evident that understanding is different from imagination.'[5] Here Averroes concluded that, beyond the dilemmatic formulation of the question, Aristotle had in the end reaffirmed the ontological diversity of the two faculties.

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[3] On the subject of early modern imagination see: Elizabeth R. Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1975); Paola Zambelli, 'L'immaginazione e il suo potere: Desiderio e fantasia psicosomatica o transitiva', in ead., *L'ambigua natura della magia* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1991), pp. 53–75; Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Pimlico, 1992); *Phantasia~Imaginatio*, eds Marta Fattori and Massimo L. Bianchi (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1998); Peter Mack, 'Early Modern Ideas of Imagination: The Rhetorical Tradition', in *Imagination in the Later Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, eds Lodi Nauta and Detlev Pätzold (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 59–76; Bernd Roling, 'Glaube, Imagination und leibliche Auferstehung: Pietro Pomponazzi zwischen Avicenna, Averroes und jüdischem Averroismus', in *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, eds Andreas Speer und Lydia Wegener (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2006), pp. 677–699; Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Guido Giglioni, 'Fantasy Islands: *Utopia*, *The Tempest* and *New Atlantis* as Places of Controlled Credulousness', in *World-Building in Early Modern Natural Philosophy*, ed. Allison Kavey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 90–117; Id., 'Coping with Inner and Outer Demons: Marsilio Ficino's Theory of the Imagination', in *Diseases of the Imagination and Imaginary Diseases: Disease in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Yasmin Haskell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 19–50.

[4] Aristotle, *De anima*, I, 1, 403a, trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 15. See also *De anima*, III, 8, 432a; *De memoria et reminiscentia*, 450a.

[5] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F. Stuart Crawford (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 365; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima *of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. Richard C. Taylor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 279.

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Aristotle's dilemma created a distinctive hermeneutical situation that led many Renaissance philosophers to exercise their exegetic skills, from Pomponazzi, who, as already noted, used the Aristotelian statement to reaffirm the profoundly material and bodily nature of human experience and culture, to Giordano Bruno, who stretched the interpretative boundaries to a limit, comparing the process of thinking to a constitutively visual and imaginative activity and the philosopher to a painter.[6] For others – in a hermeneutically more sober fashion – the Aristotelian locus meant that human beings were unable always to think in a demonstrative and systematic way, or to 'see' the truth in a direct way, and that as a result they had to resort to various forms of deliberative thinking in political and ethical contexts, and to interpret key religious statements in a figurative way. These kinds of undemonstrative and unintuitive thinking presupposed the existence of a number of alternative views on reality that needed to be negotiated before one could reach a consensus on the particular matter under discussion. No doubt, everyone seemed to agree that the imagination had a key role to play in this situation. Renaissance philosophers saw the imagination as a mediator between the body and the soul, the intellect and the senses, the appetites and the will, between the animal and natural functions of the body, motion and rest, past and future, between memories, dreams and prophecies, between nature and culture.

Averroes's contribution to this debate was momentous. In his philosophy, the imagination played a crucial role both as a faculty of knowledge and a principle of life. First, the imagination provides the metaphysical conditions that allow the intellect to think what is different from itself. By definition, the primary object of a pure intellect is its own essence, because of the already mentioned coincidence between the understanding subject (*intellectus*), the intelligibles (*intellecta*) and the understanding activity (*intelligere*); images represent the principle of otherness – the body, the world, matter, the object *qua* object. Put otherwise, while the active intellect knows all the other things that are different from it by knowing itself, the human intellect knows itself by knowing all the things that are different from itself. To put it in an even more straightforward way: God *qua* the supreme intellect knows the *reality* of things, human beings know the *images* of things. Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512), professor of logic, natural philosophy and medicine at Bologna and Padua, aptly summed up the point in his *Quolibeta de intelligentiis* (first edition 1494, republished in 1506 and 1508): 'no intellect, with the exception perhaps of the possible intellect, understands something outside itself.'[7] For Giulio Cesare

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[6] Giordano Bruno, *De imaginum compositione*, in *Opera Latine conscripta*, eds Francesco Fiorentino, Felice Tocco, G. Vitelli, Vittorio Imbriani and Carlo Maria Tallarigo, 8 vols (Naples and Florence: Morano and Le Monnier, 1879–1891), II, iii, pp. 91, 198. The most recent edition of *De imaginum compositione* is in *Opere mnemotecniche*, eds Michele Ciliberto, Marco Matteoli, Rita Sturlese and Nicoletta Tirinnanzi, 2 vols (Milan: Adelphi, 2004–2009), II, pp. 488, 660.

[7] Alessandro Achillini, *Quolibeta de intelligentiis*, f. 3, c. 2: 'nullus intellectus, nisi forte possibilis, intelligit aliquid extra se', quoted in Bruno Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), p. 188.

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Scaliger (1484–1558), the self-proclaimed champion of Aristotelian correctness, Averroes's principal mistake was to assume that a separate intellect could understand through human *phantasmata*, when in fact this intellect acts in such a way that, 'by intuiting itself, it sees everything.'[8]

The second important role played by the imagination in Averroes's system was to provide the psychological and physiological conditions that make each individual human being a vital self and an ensouled body capable of abstracting the *esse intentionale* from the *esse reale*. Averroes called this sophisticated form of apprehensive faculty, emerging from the potency of matter, *cogitativa*, the cogitative faculty, and he made it the distinguishing mark of human nature.[9] However, for an Aristotelian like Zabarella, the Averroists' attempt to explain human thinking as the union of the intellect with the *phantasmata* in man's *cogitativa* was a mere 'subterfuge'. Such a union (the famed *copulatio* of the Averroists) could be interpreted as a momentary conjunction resulting from the activity of the imagination (*per phantasmata*) or as an original bond existing 'by nature' (*per naturam*). In criticising the view that such a union was made possible by man's *phantasmata*, Zabarella referred to one of Aquinas's arguments:

> If someone, in Averroes's defence, says that the intellect is joined to man through the representations of his imagination (*phantasmata*), and therefore it happens that man understands when the intellect understands, this, says Thomas, means nothing, for, when the intellect according to its nature is deemed to be separate from the human nature, its union with it through the representations of the imagination (*phantasmata*) contributes nothing to making man understand, because these representations are indeed human, but in relation to the intellect their only function is to be a motive object [i.e., *they work as stimuli to the activity of thinking, not as their form*] and a known thing (*res cognita*), not a knowing subject (*cognoscens*). Therefore, through his own representations, a man does not become a subject capable of understanding, in the same way as a wall does not become capable of seeing through the colour with which it stimulates the eye.[10]

Possessing *phantasmata* does not make a human being think any more than possessing colours makes a thing a subject capable of seeing. *Phantasmata* are potential *res intellectae*, 'understood things', not *intelligentes res*, 'understanding things'. The role of *phantasmata* is to stimulate the production of intelligible species in the intellect. The solution to this problem offered by some Averroists was to say that the intellect depends on man's body in a 'representational' sense (*objective*), that is,

[8] Julius Caesar Scaliger, *Hippocratis liber de somniis* (Lyon: Sébastien Gryphe, 1539), p. 9.

[9] On the meaning of 'cogitative' faculty, see the clear and concise definition contained in Rudolph Göckel's *Lexicon philosophicum* (Frankfurt: Matthias Becker's widow, 1613), p. 380: 'The cogitative faculty is the primary faculty of the senses, and is also called particular reason, for particular conclusions are drawn from it. Averroes maintains that one can find in Aristotle's work the reference to an individual discerning faculty (*virtus distinctiva individualis*), that is, a virtue that distinguishes in an individual and not universal fashion.' Göckel also adds, without making any reference to Averroes, that 'sometimes the act of cogitating is taken for the imagination.'

[10] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 926C. See Thomas Aquinas, *On There Being Only One Intellect*, ed. R. McInerny (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), p. 85.

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insofar as it depends on human representations (*phantasmata*) understood as the object from which the intellect is 'moved' (which is very close to Pomponazzi's solution). But again, as Aquinas had already demonstrated, this would simply mean that man is *understood* rather than being the *understanding* principle, i.e., an object of thought rather than a thinking subject.[11]

A second way of characterising the union between the intellect and man's imaginative and cogitative faculties was to postulate an original, natural union between them. Such *copulatio* through nature was supposed to be in place before the development of the cogitative faculty so that its partial abstractive powers occur already at an earlier stage, even before the soul begins to supply *phantasmata* with a sufficient degree of transparency to be used by the material intellect. In this case, too, Zabarella contested that a real union could take place in human beings because the 'presence' of the intellect was 'already constituted through the cogitative faculty and completed in the human species, in the same way that a man in a ship that is not sailing is said to be present in the ship, but not united to it.' For Zabarella, it did not make any sense to say that the intellect was united 'by nature', because the intellect does not inform, i.e., pervade the whole psycho-physical compound and does not constitute it as a human being. Rather, for the human mind the experience of knowing things would be the same as being possessed by a demon:

> a demon that possesses a human being is not united to him, although it takes control of him (*assistat*) and it is even said to move his limbs. Therefore, as when a demon who possesses a human being understands, but the human being does not understand that he is carrying a demon, likewise, if the human mind lies in the human being in a way that it does not give man its being, when such a mind understands, man does not understand.[12]

Here Zabarella is rehearsing a series of well-known polemical *topoi* that had long been used in addressing Averroes's notion of the intellect. In the secondary literature on Averroes's philosophy and its medieval and Renaissance interpretations, the notion of the intellect is usually presented as the necessary prerequisite for a correct understanding of the notion of the imagination. This interpretative angle is not without reason, for it cannot be denied that Averroes's theory of the intellect lays the metaphysical coordinates of his philosophy. The role of the imagination, however, cannot be confined to the act of providing the intellect with images of sublunary reality.

In recent years, a number of historians of philosophy working on Averroes's thought have been drawing attention to the fact that a better understanding of how the higher cognitive functions of the soul operate can be reached if the faculty of sense perception rather than the intellect is taken as the starting point.[13] Michael Blaustein, for instance, has argued that apprehension, understood as a process of

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[11] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 930.

[12] Ibid., c. 928B. The image of the ship is already in Aquinas's *De unitate intellectus* (*On There Being Only One Intellect*, p. 87).

[13] See Michael Blaustein, *Averroes on the Imagination and the Intellect*, PhD thesis, Harvard University, 1984; Richard C. Taylor, '*Cogitatio*, *Cogitativus* and *Cogitare*: Remarks on the Cogitative Power in Averroes', in *L'élaboration du vocabulaire philosophique au Moyen Âge*, eds Jacqueline Hamesse and Carlos Steel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 110–146 (120); Emanuele Coccia, *La trasparenza delle immagini: Averroè e l'averroismo* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2005).

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image formation, represents the key notion in Averroes's theory of knowledge. For Averroes, any apprehended form is an 'intention' – *ma'nā*, in Arabic, i.e., an image (usually the term is translated as 'meaning') – of the known object, and therefore it has a dual nature, i.e., it is both a thing in its own right and the thing it represents. (The scholastics expressed the same concept with the notions of *ratio formalis* and *ratio obiectiva*.) Intentions are representations, but they should be understood as vital apprehensions rather than passive and mechanical reflections of reality. Out of sensible and material experience, they produce representations of reality that are increasingly more abstract. This model of apprehensive intentionality is multi-layered. The external senses apprehend the 'intentions' of the sensible qualities, the common sense apprehends the 'intentions' of the senses, and so on until we arrive at the intellect, which apprehends the 'intentions' of the cogitative faculty. The main difference between *cogitativa* and *intellectus* is that the cogitative faculty apprehends individual forms, while the intellect apprehends universal intelligible forms. Human beings cogitate, do not think, and their acts of cogitation are imagined intentions that prelude to the forms of the material intellect.[14]

That Averroes devised a comprehensive model of apprehensive intentionality is confirmed by the way in which Renaissance philosophers interpreted his theory of the imagination. In this case, it is evident that they addressed the question in a more comprehensive manner, taking into consideration not only the intellect as a cognitive power, but also the wider context of the internal senses, the system of the natural faculties of the body, the cosmological setting in its broader significance (including theories of physical change, reproduction and even angelology), not to mention the aesthetic, rhetorical and political implications underpinning the question of the relationship between the intellect and the imagination. The faculty of the imagination is involved in all these different contexts and its meaning cannot be narrowed down to the relationship that it entertains with the intellect. Indeed, it is through broadening the scope of the imagination in Averroes's system that we can shed new light on his theory of the intellect.

Since Renaissance authors perceived the Averroist view of the imagination as particularly multifaceted, a proper investigation of this notion should address at least five levels of analysis: the ontological and noetic question (or: What is the point of such an elaborate dream of the intellect – i.e., providing the intellect with the imagination's *intentiones* – if everything, in the final analysis, is eternal and intellectual?), the cosmological question (or: Do celestial intellects imagine? How does the flow of intelligible light coming from the celestial intelligences intersect with the material intellect?), the anthropological and psychological question (or: What is the nature of the bond that connects the mind with the body?), the medical question (or: Does the faculty of imagining things have as much power in altering the psycho-physiological state of human beings as the faculty of believing in them?) and, finally – to borrow

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[14] Blaustein, *Averroes on the Imagination and the Intellect*. For some of the meanings of *intentio* that are relevant here, see Göckel, *Lexicon philosophicum*, p. 255: 'intentio nihil aliud est quam imago, hoc est, species rei' (in a strictly optical sense); p. 256: 'Intentionales dicuntur species sensiles, quia obiecta materialia sensui repraesentant.'

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(in this case, quite legitimately) the convenient label introduced by Spinoza – the theologico-political question (or: What is the role of the imagination in establishing systems of human beliefs?). As we will see in the course of this chapter, in all these cases the role of the imagination appears to be crucial.

The Cosmological Aspects of Averroes's Imagination

Some Renaissances philosophers thought that the characteristically Averroist tension between the oneness (*unitas*) of the material intellect and the unified process of actualisation imparted to the sublunary world by its energy (*informatio*) could be solved by putting the discussion in a cosmological context. In the already mentioned *Quolibeta de intelligentiis*, Achillini explained how the material intellect, considered to be the lowest in the series of heavenly intelligences, could be united to man's soul when this was conjoined to the active intellect (i.e., the highest intellect). In this scheme, the function of human imagination was not confined to making all *phantasmata* of natural things transparent, but also included the ability to receive, through the mediation of the material intellect, the knowledge coming from the rest of the planetary intelligences. Achillini thought that the celestial intelligences, on the one hand, and the sublunary world, on the other, met and reverberated in the imagination of human beings when they were in the process of cogitating.[15]

Averroes's material intellect could therefore be interpreted as both the lowest planetary intelligence and the one intellect covering the mental activity of the human species. As Zabarella summed up Averroes's position,

> [i]t was Averroes's and also Themistius's opinion, then followed by many later thinkers, that man's rational soul, which Averroes called the possible intellect, is not multiplied according to the number of human beings, but is only one in number for the whole human species, and it is the lowest intelligence of all, to which the entire human species was assigned as its specific and adequate sphere. And this intellect, when a man dies, does not die, and maintains its numerical identity in the rest of human beings.[16]

This cosmological point of view implies that the light of the intellect affects not only the knowledge of universals and concepts, but also the very roots of sensible knowledge. The *intentiones ymaginabiles*, Averroes had written in his Long Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, are universals in potentiality. They are like seeds that need to be brought to their condition of full actualisation.[17] The cosmological

[15] See Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano*, p. 217.

[16] Zabarella, *Liber de mente humana*, c. 962CD.

[17] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, p. 220: 'Et dixit: *et iste quasi sunt in anima*, quia post declarabit quod ea que sunt de prima perfectione in intellectu quasi sensibilia de prima perfectione sensus, scilicet in hoc quod ambo movent, sunt intentiones ymaginabiles, et iste sunt universales potentia, licet non actu; et ideo dixit: *et iste quasi sunt in anima*, et non dixit *sunt*, quia intentio universalis est alia ab intentione ymaginata.' See Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima, pp. 171–172.

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significance of this process becomes even more apparent when we examine Averroes's views concerning generation and reproduction. 'The sun and the other stars are the principle of life and of everything that is alive in nature,' he wrote in his Long Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysica*.[18] Seeds are endowed with energy coming from the stars and even living beings that are produced through spontaneous generation result from the influence of celestial heat. *Sol et homo generant hominem*. Rationality, order and proportion, Averroes argued in the same commentary, are embedded in nature, and they derive from the astral intelligences. The active and shaping forces contained in seeds are analogous to the power emanating from the celestial intelligences, since they display a teleological behaviour (*adducunt ad finem*). They have the power to regulate the specific level of heat necessary for activating all vital functions. This *mensura* derives from 'the divine intellectual art.' It is by virtue of such art that 'nature accomplishes things in a perfect and orderly manner as if, under the influence of loftier active powers, it were reminded of those that are called intelligences.'[19] A number of Renaissance philosophers, relying on passages like these, looked to Averroes's material intellect as yet another incarnation of the *anima mundi*. As already noted, the lowest intellect in the series of celestial intelligences belongs to human beings only insofar as they are collectively taken to represent the species 'human being'. Seen in this light, the material intellect represents the thought and the imagination of the sublunary world and as such it also contains its life. This explains why cosmological and pantheistic readings of Averroes's theory of the intellect became popular during the Renaissance and were still referred to until late in the seventeenth century.[20]

[AU1]

The interplay of dreams and imagination in Averroes's philosophy is closely related to the question of the cosmological aspects of the imagination. Reading his *Epitome* on *Parva naturalia*, one has the clear impression that sleeping and dreaming provided Averroes with a golden opportunity – an experimental opportunity, as it were – to explore the potentialities of perception, feeling and imagination. The advantages offered by states of sleeping and dreaming lay in the possibility of

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[18] Averroes, *In metaphysica*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 12 vols (Venice: Giunta, 1562; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1962), VIII, fol. 305^{rC}.

[19] Ibid., f. 305^{rAE}. See also ibid., fols 180^{v}–181^{r} (natural virtues in seeds are 'similes intellectui, scilicet quia agunt actiones intellectuales.' Cfr. *In de generatione animalium*, ibid., VI, f. 76^{rC}: 'haec nam virtus animata est similis arti, et continetur in genere naturae celestis: et id quod ipsam generat, est de necessitate quid separatum (sive immateriale) cum videatur agere in aliud absque instrumento corporeo. iam autem fuit declaratum in libro de Anima, quod huiusmodi res appellatur intellectus.' See also Averroes, *Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva naturalia vocantur*, ed. E. Ledyard Shields (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1949), p. 106.

[20] For Henry More's interpretation of Averroes's material intellect as a form of *anima mundi*, see Sarah Hutton's essay in this volume. See also Alastair Hamilton, 'A "Sinister Conceit": The Teaching of Psychopannychism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment', in *La formazione storica dell'alterità: Studi di storia della tolleranza nell'età moderna offerti a Antonio Rotondò*, eds Henry Méchoulan, Richard H. Popkin, Giuseppe Ricuperati and Luisa Simonutti, 3 vols (Florence: Olschki, 2001), III, pp. 1107–1127 (1115).

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studying the process through which the *copulatio* – the union between the intellect and the imagination – occurs *in concreto*. The main question then becomes: What is the scope and what are the boundaries of the apprehensive power, especially in all those circumstances in which sensible objects appear not to be affecting the senses? Dream imagination (*ymaginatio que fit in sompno*), precisely because it has the unique characteristic of not being *sensus in potentia*, nor *sensus in actu* (for no sensible objects are involved), is as it were a sample of imagination in its plain, unadulterated form – pure fungibility in the exchange of cognitive goods from all regions of the universe.[21] Another important aspect is that in dreams (but it is fair to say that the same holds true for sensory hallucinations), the ordinary route of knowledge is reversed: rather than from the senses to the intellect, the direction is from the intellect down to the senses.

Amongst the authors who discussed Averroes's theory of dreams during the Renaissance, we can mention Julius Caesar Scaliger and Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), the former a staunch Aristotelian, the latter a harsh critic of the tradition of medieval Aristotelianism. Scaliger was well aware that the role of the imagination in divinatory dreams could have dramatic consequences for the Averroist theory of the intellect. He pointed out that a philosophical position which looks at the separate intellect as the certifier of divinatory dreams and, at the same time, describes divination in terms of knowledge that deals with individual corporeal substances (*materialia* and *individua*) was inevitably exposed to embarrassing difficulties. In his discussion of Averroes's position, Scaliger went straight to the point and ruled out the possibility that the intellect could know through the representations conveyed by the imagination, the *phantasmata*. The intellect, he said, 'does not receive knowledge when it knows, for in this case it would be an imperfect intellect.' Rather, he went on to say, 'the intellect is in itself its own knowledge and knowledge of itself (*ipsemet, sua, suique cognitio est*).' Furthermore, in the typical spirit of Aristotelian immanentism, he reminded his readers that 'universals are in matter,' otherwise they would be the same as Plato's intellectual figments (*idearum figmenta non admittimus*). In Scaliger's opinion, by defending both the separate condition of the intellect and the possibility of divining particular events, Averroes was led to maintain the view that God did not create the world. Since God could not have intellection of particular things, Averroes had been forced to reject the thesis that He had created particular things. 'This is what vexed that man,' said Scaliger, 'the fact that the understanding subject, the understood object and the act of understanding are one single thing in separate intellects. Therefore, if the separate intellect understands what is corruptible, the intellect itself will be corruptible.'[22]

Scaliger's critique of Averroes's theory of prophetic dreams rested on two main assumptions. First, a true intellect, in an Aristotelian sense, is pure actuality, therefore cannot have a receptive nature and rely on the objects conveyed to it by human

[21] Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, p. 367; Id., *Long Commentary on the* De anima, p. 280.

[22] Scaliger, *Hippocratis liber de somniis*, p. 10.

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imaginations. Secondly, the real place where universals could be found is the material worlds of particulars. For Scaliger, the intellect represented a closed system of pure actuality constantly actualising itself; in a way, one might describe it as an uninterrupted cycle of self-referential understanding. As such, he regarded the view that the intellect communicates externally with the individual imaginations of human beings as deeply inconsistent. While Averroes had looked at prophetic dreams as interferences in an otherwise unremitting flow of intelligible knowledge, for Scaliger the very notion of interference represented a flagrant breach in the Aristotelian model of intelligible determinism.

Unlike Scaliger, Gianfrancesco Pico was quite a severe critic of Aristotelian philosophy and his attack on Averroes aimed at two central tenets in the Averroistic reading of Aristotle's metaphysics, i.e., the very notion of nature, understood as a thoroughly deterministic system, and the idea that, through a methodical and severe exercise of speculative knowledge (so methodical an exercise to become an ingrained disposition), man could even attain the very knowledge of God. In *De rerum praenotione* (1506–1507), he argued that prophetic revelation could not derive from one's personal application (*studium*) or from nature. He devoted a specific chapter to criticising the theories of Avicenna, Algazel (al-Ghazālī), Averroes, Moses Maimonides and Moses of Narbonne. Of the four, Pico portrayed Avicenna as the most radical in his views about the powers of the imagination. He interpreted Avicenna as holding the view that 'the rational soul understands only when it is converted to the higher intelligence on which it depends.' He added that, 'as a result of the very purity of that soul, it could happen that the soul is joined by God to the intelligence itself, so that it would acquire the knowledge of sacred mysteries, predict future events, subdue and command matter through the influence of the imagination (*appulsus imaginationis*), to the point that even the elements could be affected by the imagination (*ministerio imaginationis*).'[23] For Pico, the assumption that there could be a natural flow of divine revelations from celestial intelligences contravened the very principles of Aristotelian science. Such intelligences would pour intelligible species directly into the mind of human beings without taking into account the senses and the *phantasmata*. For Pico, the problem with this view was not so much the attempt to roll the Trojan horse of Platonic innatism into the citadel of Aristotelian naturalism as it was the blatant lack of consistency in the explanatory framework that was supposed to be cogent and systematic: Why then should the soul of a human being be united to a body?[24] Like Scaliger, Pico conceded to both Avicenna and Algazel that 'separate minds can see new species in the senses and the imaginations (*phantasmata*),' but he denied that this kind of knowledge could be seen as either ordinary or natural.

Not surprisingly, of the four authors examined, Pico reserved the most severe treatment to Averroes. Averroes, he wrote, 'dreamt (maybe he was drunk) that our cogitative power could join the intelligence that is the closest to us, which he called

[23] Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *De rerum praenotione*, in *Opera omnia*, 2 vols (Basel: Henricpetri, 1557–1573), II, p. 418.

[24] Pico, *De rerum praenotione*, p. 419.

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the active intellect, and that from that conjunction perfect bliss would ensue.' He believed that, once human beings had acquired all the theoretical and practical habits, the intellect would naturally extend (*continuaretur*) to the cogitative faculty and that the ability to foresee future events would inevitably accompany the newly-reached state of absolute happiness, for – and this for Pico was the main rationale behind Averroes's view – who could be happy to all effects without perceiving his or her future?[25] As in Scaliger's case, the principal objection Pico addressed to Averroes's interpretation of prophetic visions was that the character of 'multifarious variety' could never be reconciled with the allegedly direct intervention of 'one intelligence'. Pico dismissed Averroes's attempt to make sense of anomalous cases of imaginative receptivity towards intelligible universals as unjustifiable given the nature of Aristotelian determinism, both logical and ontological.

Pico was aware that in the *Epitome on Parva naturalia* Averroes himself had struggled with this delicate problem. This was all the more reason for him to question this very point: 'How could you, Averroes, obtain prophetic knowledge from this conjunction of yours, when in your commentary on sleep you argued that one cannot have theoretical science from revelation, for, if this happened to someone, he could be said to be a human being only in an equivocal sense? Indeed, you positively declared that such a person would be an angel rather than a human being.'[26] In his criticisms, Pico mentioned the role of *natura* and *studium*. By *natura* he meant the cognitive abilities that are specific to the human species; by *studium* the very possibility of progressing towards fulfilling one's intellectual potentialities through exercise, habits and concentration. But nature and individual effort were precisely the features that Pico wanted to remove from the definition of prophetic knowledge. What is more, Pico was not sure which power had been privileged by Averroes in his explanation of prophetic dreams, whether the intellect or the imagination, the intellect being the source of veridical visions, but the imagination being the material requisite that allowed intelligible truths to become particular and therefore visible.

From a more empirical point of view, Pico contested the view that prophetic dreams and imaginations could result from the exercise of intellectual knowledge. It was a matter of conventional wisdom among both physicians and natural philosophers to assume that in the act of dreaming the *copulatio* of the intellect with the bodily faculties was so close that it was not always easy to assess the extent to which the production of images depended on the digestion of food or on the actual vision of divine truths. Pico argued that, precisely because of the many material and cultural conditionings, the example of the prophets from both the Old and the New Testament did not support Averroes's account of the active intellect and the notion of *copulatio* that he had introduced to strengthen his case. 'It is apparent,' he wrote, 'that there were once very famous prophets who never gained all the speculative and practical habits,' such as David, Amos and Jeremiah. In Pico's view, Averroes ignored the fact that these prophets were mostly shepherds, soldiers, illiterate people and adolescents.

[25] Ibid., p. 421.

[26] Ibid., p. 422.

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And yet, to Pico's surprise, Averroes's explanation had been appropriated by such distinguished authors as Moses Maimonides and Moses of Narbonne, who, Pico continued, 'remembered Averroes so well that they forgot the tradition of Jewish studies, for they say that old men do not prophesy because of the weakness of their imaginative power.' For Pico, their position reflected an embarrassing combination of medical incompetence with a smattering of scriptural exegesis. Leaving aside the authority of the biblical text, Pico explained that, even from a strictly medical point of view, the imagination of old people was in fact more reliable because the excesses of humoral moisture 'could be reduced to a right and suitable balance.' Pico found Averroes's inaccuracies in medical matters even more embarrassing, for Averroes prided himself on being a physician. Trying to rescue Averroes's theory of prophecy by using Averroistic arguments and to support the thesis that prophets like Moses did in fact prophesy when they were old, Moses of Narbonne came up with the following hypothesis ad hoc: 'Moses was excellent in using the *cogitativa*, which was something peculiar to him, but not the *imaginativa*, the use of which was common to other people.' Pico did not hesitate to dismiss this distinction as irrelevant, although the nature of the difference between *cogitativa* and *imaginativa* was one of the most delicate and controversial points in the whole tradition of exegesis of Averroes.[27]

Medical inaccuracies aside, Pico was mostly concerned with the possibility that Averroes's notion of prophetic dream paved the way for forms of secularisation and naturalisation of prophetic knowledge. For Pico, prophecy should not be mistaken for a kind of natural precognition. Prophetic enlightenment was given directly by God to men as a gift and as a proof of His favour. Last but not least – especially given the fact that the Averroists claimed to be true Aristotelians – the idea of prophetic imagination was contrary to the very spirit of the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, according to which 'the soul is united to the body as a thoroughly blank tablet, where nothing is painted or represented, and everything can be known by the soul through the ordinary power of nature only with the mediation of the senses and the imagination (*phantasia*).'[28]

At this point, one might wonder who in this debate was the true advocate for the power of the imagination, whether Julius Caesar Scaliger (who confined the power of the imagination, as a distinctively animal faculty, to the domain of nature, depriving its operations of any access to the intelligible realm of the intellect), or Gianfrancesco Pico (who fully acknowledged the material conditionings of the imagination and argued that natural knowledge could only be a form of knowledge mediated by the imagination and the senses, while prophecy was a direct illumination from God's

[27] Ibid., pp. 422–423. See Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 130–131: 'A certaine *Rabbine*, upon the Text; *Your Young Men shall see visions, and your Old Men shall dream dreames*; Inferreth, that *Young Men* are admitted nearer to God then *Old*; Because *Vision* is a clearer Revelation, then a *Dreame*.' Both Pico and Bacon refer to Ioel, 2:28.

[28] Pico, *De rerum praenotione*, p. 423. On Moses of Narbonne's theory of prophecy, see Alfred L. Ivry, 'Moses of Narbonne's "Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul". A Methodological and Conceptual Analysis', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 57 (1967), pp. 271–296.

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intellect), or, finally, Averroes and his medieval and Renaissance followers (who regarded the imagination as a power that, material as it may be, was nonetheless capable of imbibing the light of the intellect). By allowing exchanges of intelligible currents to occur between the intellect and the imagination in both directions, Averroes and the Averroists were in possession of a more flexible tool to interpret the complex reality of dreams and divinatory knowledge. They could therefore argue that, on the one hand, the imagination was able to visualise the universals of the intellect (a function whose scope and limits become apparent every time prophets receive truthful dreams and visions) and, on the other hand, the material intellect extracted the reasons of the material world (*intentiones*) conveyed by the *phantasmata*. Accordingly, the intellect represented a reality of a higher order, indeed immaterial, but the aspects of matter and corporeity maintained an irreplaceable function in the sublunary world. What is more, within such a view of the cosmos, the imagination remained – paradoxically – the only link, tenuous though it may be, with reality (the lessened 'reality' of the senses, below, and the heightened 'reality' of the intellect, above).

The Medical Aspects of Averroes's Notion of Imagination

In Averroes's philosophy, the human soul is the place in the universe where the supralunary and sublunary worlds meet. The part of the soul where this connection occurs is the cogitative power, the highest form of sense perception and the culmination of the animal faculties of the soul. By contrast, many Renaissance philosophers considered the special faculty of cogitation a pointless addition to an already crowded set of internal senses. Zabarella thought that the imagination (*phantasia*) could account for the complex operations of the internal senses by itself, without assuming further subdivisions. Most of all, there was no need to introduce a special apprehensive power, whether estimative or cogitative, to explain feelings of agreeableness (*iucunditas*) and dislike (*molestia*) perceived by human beings and some non-human animals.[29] The same view was later echoed by the Coimbra commentators, who held that common sense and the imagination (*phantasia*) could account for all the animal operations of the soul: 'all the functions of the cogitative faculty can be referred to the imagination.'[30]

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[29] Zabarella, *Liber de facultatibus animae*, in *De rebus naturalibus*, c. 723C. Zabarella distinguishes only three internal senses: *sensus communis*, *phantasia* and *memoria*. See Coimbra Commentators, *In tres libros de anima Aristotelis* (Cologne: Lazar Zetzner, 1609), c. 393EF. On the internal senses in Averroes, see: Helmut Gätje. 'Die "inneren Sinne" bei Averroes', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 115 (1965), pp. 255–293; Deborah L. Black, 'Imagination and Estimation: Arabic Paradigms and Western Transformations', *Topoi*, 19 (2000), pp. 59–75; Ead., 'Averroes on the Spirituality and Intentionality of Sensation', *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century* (London and Turin: The Warburg Institute and Aragno, 2011), pp. 159–174.

[30] Coimbra Commentators, *In tres libros de anima Aristotelis*, c. 394C.

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In fact, behind Averroes's decision to extend the powers of the imagination there was no intention to multiply the internal senses, but to reaffirm the view that intentions and apprehensions constituted potential patterns of intelligibility to be unfolded and actualised through the use of increasingly more abstract forms of imaging activity. The intentions, lying dormant in matter as it were in a state of virtual existence (*intentiones ymaginabiles*), covered the whole spectrum of sublunary life, from the unintentional but purposeful movements of nature (*natura*) to the conscious perceptions of the animal beings (*sensus*). On this particularly delicate point, Averroes's medical work can shed some light. In the *Colliget* and *Collectanea*, he advanced the radical view – which is neither Aristotelian, nor Galenic – that natural faculties were by themselves vital and capable of discriminating among various objects. In doing so, they were endowed with a cognitive power, and therefore there was no need to assume the existence of special natural instincts in animals. Unlike Aristotle, Averroes described the vegetative faculties of the soul as capable of performing simple but fundamental cognitive tasks (by discriminating between what is conducive to life and what is not). Unlike Galen, he described the vital functions of the body as regulated by the common sense and its allied functions located in the heart.[31]

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[31] Averroes's *Colliget* (*Kitāb al-Kulliyyāt fī 'l-*Ḍibb) was translated into Latin in Padua in 1255 by a 'magister Bonacosa hebreus.' Averroes's commentary on Avicenna's *Cantica* was translated around 1284 by Armengaud de Blaise of Montpellier. Bonacosa's translation was first published in Venice by Otinus de Luna in 1497 and reprinted in an improved edition in the Giunta *edition* of 1572 with a book translated by Jacob Mantino. In 1537, Jean-Baptiste Bruyerin, nephew of Symphorien Champier, physician to Henry II and author of a *De re cibaria* published in 1560 in Lyon, translated Averroes's *Collectanea de re medica* from Hebrew manuscripts. On Bruyerin, see P. Allut, *Étude biographique et bibliographique sur Symphorien Champier* (Lyon: Nicolas Scheuring, 1859), pp. 49–50; Ernst Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2002), p. 267). See the recent Spanish translation of the original Arabic *Kulliyyāt* by María de la Concepción Vázquez de Benito and Camilo Álvarez Morales, *El libro de las generalidades de la medicina* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2003) and their introduction to the volume (pp. 9–40). On Averroes's medical views see: Francisco X. Rodriguez Molero, 'La neurología en la "Suma anatómica" de Averroes', *Archivo Iberoamericano de Historia de la Medicina y Antropología Médica*, 2 (1950), pp. 137–188; Id., 'Originalidad y estilo de la anatomía de Averroes', *Revista Al-Ándalus*, 15 (1950), pp. 47–63; Id.'Averroes, médico y filósofo', *Archivo Iberoamericano de Historia de la Medicina y Antropología Médica*, 8 (1956), pp. 187–190; Id., 'Un maestro de la medicina arábigo-española: Averroes', *Miscelanea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, 11 (1962), pp. 55–73; J. Christoph Bürgel, 'Averroes 'contra Galenum'. Das Kapitel von der Atmung im Colliget des Averroes als ein Zeugnis mittelalterlich-islamischer Kritik an Galen, eingeleitet, arabisch herausgegeben und übersetzt', *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, 1 (1967), pp. 263–340; E. Torre, *Averroes y la ciencia médica* (Madrid: Ediciones del Centro, 1974); Danielle Jacquart and Françoise Micheau, *La médecine arabe et l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1996), p. 182 passim; Carmela Baffioni, 'Further Notes on Averroes' Embryology and the Question of the "Female Sperm"', in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Heritage*, ed. C. Baffioni (Naples: Guida, 2004), pp. 159–172. On Averroes's influence on medieval and Renaisance medicine, see: Heinrich Schipperges, *Die Assimilation der arabischen Medizin durch das lateinische Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1964), pp. 137–138; Nancy G. Siraisi, *Arts and Sciences at Padua. The Studium of Padua before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1973), p. 155;

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In his important study on the Venetian editions of Aristotle and Averroes, Charles Schmitt argued that Averroes's writings 'added a medical component' to the understanding of the Aristotelian philosophy.[32] Averroes's medical synthesis had broadened the conceptual and terminological scope of medical theory in such subjects as the composition of medicines, the role of unnatural heat (*calor putredinalis*) in causing fever, the anatomical seat of the soul, the status of the vital faculties and the theory of reproduction.[33] A possible way of defining Averroes's attitude in his medical work might be to say that, in a number of anatomical questions, he tried to show how Aristotle could be used as a more reliable authority than Galen.[34]

Of course, since the intellect for Averroes is incorporeal and separate, one would look in vain for an anatomical account of the mind and its faculties in his medical works. What one finds, though, is a precise anatomy of the imagination and the cogitative power.[35] Averroes located the functions of the imagination and cogitation in the head, in a series of intercommunicating concavities (*cellulae cerebri*), two in the frontal part of the brain, one in the middle and one in the back, anatomically configured in such a way that, by opening and closing their respective entrances, the soul could be able to imagine, remember and formulate inferences.[36] Averroes also hinted at a 'ruling power' (*virtus regitiva*), a general faculty which 'communicates with the body as a whole' and which is served by four or five sub-faculties, i.e., the attractive, retentive, digestive, excretive and discerning (*discretiva*) powers.[37] Undoubtedly, one of the most intriguing aspects in Averroes's physiology is to be found in the way it redefines the network of natural, vital and animal faculties in the body. As already said, Averroes expunged the notion of vital faculty as understood by Galen, but, unlike Aristotle, he assigned a certain level of discerning power even

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Charles B. Schmitt, 'Renaissance Averroism Studied through the Venetian Editions of Aristotle-Averroes (with Particular Reference to the Giunta Edition of 1550–2)', originally in *L'averroismo in Italia* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1979), pp. 121–142; repr. in Charles B. Schmitt, *The Aristotelian Tradition and Renaissance Universities* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), pp. 121–142, pp. 123, 140; Per-Gunnar Ottosson, *Scholastic Medicine and Philosophy: A Study of Commentaries on Galen's* Tegni *(ca. 1300–1450)* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1984), pp. 138–139; Edward P. Mahoney, 'Albert the Great and the Studio Patavino in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays*, ed. James A. Weisheipl (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1994), pp. 537–563; Nancy G. Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy. The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 248–253 (the case of Giovanni Battista Da Monte).

[32] Schmitt, 'Renaissance Averroism Studied through the Venetian Editions of Aristotle-Averroes', p. 124.

[33] See Luis García Ballester and Eustaquio Sánchez Salor, 'Introduction' to Arnald of Villanova, *Commentum supra tractatum Galieni de malicia complexionis diverse*, in *Opera medica omnia* (Granada and Barcelona: Publicacions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1975-), XV, pp. 108–109.

[34] The discerning ability is one of the natural powers. See Averroes, *Colliget*, in Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois commentariis*, Supplementum I, fols 20^{vG}, 24^{rCD}.

[35] See Taylor, 'Remarks on the Cogitative Power in Averroes', p. 124.

[36] Averroes, *Colliget*, fol. 9^{vGH}.

[37] Ibid., fol. 18^{vM}.

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to the vegetative functions of the body. As a result, Averroes's system of bodily functions looks more coherent and cohesive than the Aristotelian and Galenic ones: from the concocting faculties of the similar parts to the cogitative faculty located in the ventricles of the head, one continuous rational force permeates the whole organism. There is no leap from the vegetative to the sensitive soul as in Aristotle's physiology, no gap between nature, life and knowledge as in Galen's physiology. Unlike Galen, Averroes did not see the point of introducing extra vital virtues: 'there are no more operations apart from these two, that is, the nutritive (*nutribilis*) and the sensitive (*sensitiva*) faculties.'[38] In Averroes's anatomy, the natural and nutritive faculty – the basis for all other faculties – is located in the heart, and from there the *nutrimentum cordiale* – i.e., the vital heat – is distributed to the various parts of the body.[39] The heart, in turn, controls the brain. In keeping with the principles of Aristotle's cardiocentric physiology, Averroes provided a series of empirical proofs and rational arguments to demonstrate that the brain depends on the heart even for its sensori-motor operations. One of these proofs is based on a syllogism that is particularly revealing to understand Averroes's position on the anatomy of perception and life:

> the animal is provided with nourishment and the nutritive power only through the sensitive power of the senses. But the organ whereby the brain is helped by the heart through the heat which it transmits to the brain is the five senses; therefore the sensitive power is first and foremost located in the heart; and this power is the common sense.[40]

The most important thing animals need for their self-preservation is nourishment. In their search for food, they are greatly helped by the senses, which, although they are managed by the brain through the nervous system, are nevertheless maintained by the natural heat produced and administered by the heart. During the Renaissance, a number of physicians and natural philosophers interpreted Averroes's attempt to conflate Aristotelian with Galenic motifs as an original and bold rearrangement of disciplinary boundaries. Some of them considered the reorganisation too bold. Jean Fernel (1497–1558), the author of a wide-ranging reorganization of medical learning, thought, for instance, that Averroes's view ran the risk of oversimplifying the anatomical picture by transforming the vital and natural faculties into manifestations of one discerning power emanating from the heart and distributed throughout the body by means of the natural heat. In his *Physiologia* (published in various reedited versions in 1542, 1554 and 1567), he explained that 'all those who were led by Averroes to swear allegiance' to the Aristotelian view that there is no specifically vital power intermediate between the natural and the animal (cognitive) faculties were nevertheless forced to admit the existence of such a vital power after a more careful study of the operations of the body.[41] This is another case in which

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[38] Ibid., fols 21^{rF}–21^{vG}.

[39] Ibid., fol. $21^{vG\text{-}L}$.

[40] Averroes, *Colliget*, fol. 24^{rCD}.

[41] Jean Fernel, *Physiologia*, translated and annotated by John M. Forrester, with an introduction of John Henry and J. M. Forrester (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003), p. 369.

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the characteristically Averroean tension between the intelligible light of the intellect and the intentional forms embedded in matter comes to the fore. And in this case, too, light and shadows meet halfway in Averroes's sublunary world. Within the lesser world of the human body this means that all vital processes follow specific patterns of intentionality and cogitation. If we go back to the statement with which I opened this chapter – animals *imagine*, individual human beings *cogitate*, humankind *thinks* and the heavenly intellects *intuit* and *understand themselves* – I am now in the position to add the phrase that plants and all unsentient living beings have the ability to *discern* and *discriminate*, for discerning is the primary function in the intentional pattern that seems to characterise Averroes's view of nature. He explained this crucial point in the course of a dense discussion in the second book of the *Colliget*. It is also the crucial moment when the soul makes its appearance in his medical encyclopaedia.

> We will briefly say that there are further faculties (*virtutes*) besides the forms of the temperaments (*complexionales formae*) and they are called 'souls' … And therefore we say that physicians, when they investigate the operations, they say that the faculties that can be found in the human being are three, and they are natural, vital or animal. In their opinion, the natural operations are the ones through which nutrition, growth and reproduction occur. The vital powers are the pulsific powers (*virtutes pulsatiles*), which reside in the heart and perform the function of dilating and contracting through breathing in and out, and the motive power (*virtus motiva*), which is located in the heart and is called 'elective' (*electiva*), through which the animal is moved to desire an object or to flee from it. Also, the physicians believe that there are five animal faculties, the faculties of the senses, i.e., touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight. In addition, there are the faculty of locomotion (*virtus motiva in loco*), the faculty of the imagination (*virtus imaginativa*), the estimative, cogitative, retentive and recollecting faculties (*aestimativa*, *cogitativa*, *conservativa*, *reminiscibilis*). This is the division that is used by the physicians when they divide the faculties of the soul, and although such division is not appropriate, it will not do any harm to you in the exercise of the medical art. By contrast, the division that bears on the natural motions is entirely appropriate for it is apparent that these operations cannot be based only on the four qualities, but also on faculties added to them, which are called 'souls'.[42]

Here Averroes is referring to the division of the faculties – natural, vital and animal – which was current amongst physicians. This division is not 'appropriate', but it can be used on a pragmatic and operational basis. The medical division of the faculties of the soul that is 'fully appropriate' is the one concerning the natural operations of the soul because – more correctly than in Aristotle's theory of life – Galen's view on the natural faculties demonstrates that, even at the level of digestion, growth and reproduction, the operations of the body postulate the presence of elementary functions of the soul, such as the ability to distinguish and identify nutritive from harmful substances. Therefore these functions cannot be reduced to the material qualities of the four elements. Averroes's eclectic approach in medicine is rich in theoretical implications. On the one hand, his decision to bring Galen's vital faculties back to the Aristotelian notion of the vegetative soul implied the naturalisation, so to speak, of the internal senses, which accordingly became more closely

[42] Averroes, *Colliget*, fols 16^{vM}–17^{rAB}.

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connected to the operations of the natural faculties (the primordial tendencies behind appetites and involuntary movements do not need a special faculty, i.e., Galen's 'vital' faculty). On the other hand, he entrusted the most elementary functions of life with animal prerogatives and with the ability to make decisions (the 'elective' power), for, in Averroes's opinion, there was ample and compelling evidence for assuming that the natural functions of the body show a glimpse of animal life (in contrast with the strict Aristotelian division into the vegetative and sensitive 'parts' of the soul).

All vital functions are therefore distinguished by Averroes not according to the traditional ontological divisions between the domains of *nature*, *life* and *soul*, but by assuming various degrees of abstraction within one apprehensive power (*esse intentionale*). In this sense, the rational faculty is more spiritual than the faculty of the imagination (*virtus rationalis est magis spiritualis quam imaginativa*) because it is capable of apprehending the universals (*perfectio virtutis rationalis est apprehensio rerum universalium*), but it cannot operate its abstracting function without the preliminary operations of the faculty of the imagination.[43]

Conclusion: The Imagination as a Surrogate for Thinking

We can summarise the various aspects of Averroes's multifaceted position discussed above by saying that in his view of the cosmos the imagination acts as a surrogate for reality (i.e., the intellect). This key role can be examined on various levels. The imagination is a surrogate for thinking, for life, for beliefs and for demonstrative rigour in contexts of hermeneutic understanding (law and religion). Since Averroes maintains that the intellect is not simply real knowledge, but reality *qua* reality, and that, however, human beings can experience reality only through the imagination, it is not difficult to understand why, in investigating the nature and the extent of that particular reality (*esse*) that constitute the *esse intentionale* – i.e., reality *qua* represented – , the *onus probandi* falls on the imagination.

In and by themselves, the representations of the imagination (*phantasmata*) cannot elicit acts of understanding (*intellectiones*) from the very 'matter' of knowledge. While it is true that the intellect cannot think without the objects provided by the imagination, it is also true that the faculty of the imagination cannot operate without the light of the intellect. In Averroes's view of reality and knowledge, the representations of the imagination provide a reservoir of intelligible species in a latent state, ready to be actualised by the material intellect. By encompassing all the forms of material reality in a condition of potential existence, the material intellect acts as the intelligible counterpart of prime matter. Within the sublunary world, the highest level of apprehensive activity that is compatible with the material limitations of the imagination is the cogitative operations performed by human beings.

[43] Ibid., fol. 17^{vHk}.

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As seen in the course of this chapter, the imagination – and dream imagination in particular – plays an important role in unravelling some of the most notorious puzzles of Averroes's philosophy. As suggested at the beginning, this role needs to be explored in all its various dimensions (metaphysical, epistemological, cosmological, medical and theologico-political). The most intricate of the Averroistic puzzles is, no doubt, the way in which the intellect is tied to the world of representations (*copulatio*) and the explanation of how the intelligibles in potentiality, contained in a virtual state in material reality, become intelligibles in actuality in the intellect (i.e., the original correspondence between the *esse intentionale*, *esse intelligibile/intellectum* and *esse reale*). Here it is worth reminding ourselves that Averroes's intellect is, first and foremost, a cosmological, collective and impersonal entity. It is separate, and humankind participates in its intelligible light through the representative faculty that the Latin translators of Averroes called the *cogitativa*. The act of understanding occurs in the soul of human beings through episodic contacts between human imaginations (*phantasmata*) and the virtual reservoir of intelligible forms in the material intellect, contacts that are put into effect by the active intellect. Above all, in tackling the problem of the dual existence of the intelligible natures – in the material intellect and in the cogitative soul of human beings – , one should never lose sight of the cosmological dimension that characterises the Averroistic notion of the intellect. In releasing the light of reason from the representative matter of the individual imaginations (the *phantasmata*), the power of the intellect brings to actualisation a tendency to apprehend that runs throughout the universe, from the most elementary living beings to the heavenly intelligences. In this sense, reason can be said to be already in matter and, in the specific case of human beings, reason takes on the form of an embodied cogitative faculty, corporeal and yet fully representational.

In his *De intellectu* (1503), Agostino Nifo gave a very pointed definition of Averroes's material intellect as 'the matter of all separate intellects,' for this intellect works like a switchboard that connects streams of knowledge from above and from below.[44] While it is a repository of intelligible knowledge, it also acts as a provider of information coming from the sublunary world. In a way, the world as a whole may be seen as *the* object par excellence for the material intellect, and the material intellect as *the* representation, the *phantasma* par excellence for the active intellect. I have summed up the complex layering of the Averroistic cosmos by saying that, within the Averroistic ladder of being, living beings discern, animals imagine, individual human beings cogitate, humankind as a whole thinks and intellects intuit and understand themselves; that is to say, natural operations in living organisms are capable of discriminating between the useful and the harmful, animal nature processes images (*intentions* is Averroes's term) from matter, individual men cogitate those images and the human intellect thinks insofar as it is considered a species, i.e., the human species. In this sense, the intellect of the human species thinks the sublunary world seen as one collective representation of the universe to be further

[44] Agostino Nifo, *De intellectu*, quoted in Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI*, p. 218. See Leen Spruit's essay in this volume.

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abstracted and processed by higher levels of intellectual activity. During the Renaissance, depending on how one interpreted the special relationship that connects intellects, the material intellect and bodily imaginations, the door could be left open even for possible pantheistic views of nature.

No doubt, Averroes's universe was in the end an Aristotelian universe. One might safely say that it is one of the most radical attempts to apply Aristotelian principles to the understanding of reality. In this Aristotelian universe, every aspect of reality, with the exception of the unmovable mover, is in the process of being actualised. In the ascending ladder of being each form serves as *matter* for the next form of a higher ontological level: the material intellect is matter for the active intellect, the cogitative faculty is matter for the material intellect, prime matter, finally – this recalcitrant, refractory, never completely actualised source of potentiality – is matter for the imagination. In this sense, the world of human imaginations – in itself a synthesis of the representations of the natural processes occurring in both the sublunary world and in those microcosms of life that are the human bodies – is the basis for the intellectual world of humankind.

Very aptly, Bruno Nardi described *phantasmata* in an Averroistic sense as 'an epitome of the whole world of sensible experience,' where it is important to stress the point that sensible experience is not confined to human experience.[45] Single individuals imagine (including some non-human animals), but only those individuals in nature that possess the cogitative faculty (i.e., human animals) can process images out of matter which can be mediated with beliefs and are sufficiently abstract to be actualised by the intellect. In all cases, their imaginations accrue from material processes and cosmological events. As such, they reflect the life of the whole universe. Precarious as it may be, the intellect's link with both nature and humanity is thus saved. Perhaps, in this subtle and delicate interplay of nature, history and humanity lies the most lasting legacy of Averroes's theory of the imagination. However, the cosmological understanding of the imagination was progressively abandoned by the end of the sixteenth century. During the Renaissance, Averroes's bewildering views on knowledge and nature – Zabarella's *inexcogitabilia* – cried out for philosophical comment. Then the speculative furore seemed to subside. His multifaceted theory of the imagination fell gradually into oblivion and only the political and religious implications were absorbed into the theological-political controversies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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[45] Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI*, p. 244.

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Author Queries

Chapter No.: 9 0001629570

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please provide the closing bracket for the line ‘natural virtues in seeds are ‘similes intellectui’ in the 19th footnote.	
AU2	Please provide the opening bracket for the line ‘p. 267). See the recent Spanish’ in the 31st footnote.	

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Part II
The Early Modern Period

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Chapter 10
The Cambridge Platonists and Averroes

Sarah Hutton

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The 'Averroism' which figures in my chapter is a radically attenuated version of the philosophy of Ibn Rushd – Averroism as represented by a single doctrine imputed to the Commentator, namely the idea of a single soul, common to all human beings. The subject of my chapter has less, therefore to do with the thought of Averroes in its later reception or manifestation, and more to do with an idea of Averroism which was current in seventeenth-century England. This is particularly true of the Cambridge Platonists for whom the Averroist doctrine of the *intellectus agens* is the key doctrine which they associate with Averroes and which they understood as a doctrine of a 'single soul' or 'common soul'.[1] The only one of their number to offer anything like an extensive critique of Averroes was Henry More (1614–1687). Although he too was primarily concerned with the Averroistic conception of the *intellectus agens*, his response is distinctive for his concern with the Italian Averroists of recent times, Girolamo Cardano, Pietro Pomponazzi and Giulio Cesare Vanini. Even though the Cambridge Platonists' views on the *intellectus agens* tell us more about themselves than about Averroes, their limited focus is nevertheless revealing of currents of diffusion of Averroistic ideas, and of the presence of Averroes even in the new waters of early modern philosophy. As I shall argue later, there is an important sense in which More's partial and distorted conception of the philosophy of Ibn Rushd contributed to a new conception of the self centred on consciousness. My chapter will offer a brief survey of identifiable references to Averroes in the work the Cambridge Platonists, starting with three Emmanuel College men, John Smith (1618–1652),

[1] The doctrine that there was a single Agent Intellect was held by Avicenna and al-Fārābī as well as Averroes. But Averroes held that there was a common *material* intellect. His conception of the unicity of the intellect was often, as with the Cambridge Platonists, called 'monopsychism'.

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Nathaniel Culverwell (1619–1651) and Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688). I shall then discuss Henry More, to whom the major part of this chapter will be devoted. But before discussing the Cambridge school, a few words on the background.

In early seventeenth-century England knowledge of Arabic philosophy was at a crossroads where the decline of the Aristotelian commentary tradition intersected with a newly developing interest in Arabic and Arabic sources. The most tangible evidence of the latter was the founding of a Chair in Arabic at Oxford in 1636 by Archbishop Laud.[2] On the other hand, the decline of Aristotelianism took its toll on the commentary tradition, contributing to the eclipse, among others, of *the* Commentator, Ibn Rushd. However, Aristotelianism was by no means a spent force in this period.[3] A third factor which impinges on the reception of Averroes at the time was the revised readings of Aristotle by the so-called Aristotelian naturalists, Cardano, Pomponazzi and Vanini.[4] The interpretations of these latter-day Aristotelians refocused attention on the Aristotelian conception of the soul, and thereby lent new impetus to Averroes's interpretation of Aristotelian psychology. This development goes some way towards accounting for the preoccupation with the *intellectus agens* in the references to Averroism in the English context.

Averroes was certainly known in seventeenth-century England prior to the period when the Cambridge Platonists flourished. Evidence for knowledge of Averroes *latinus* is evident from library collections. The catalogue of the extensive library of the second Viscount Conway, for example, lists both Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle (*Opera cum commentariis Averrois*, Venice, 1552), a 1525 edition of his *De substantia orbis* and Marco Antonio Zimara's *Tabulae et dilucidationes in dicta Aristotelis et Averrois* (Venice, 1564).[5] These texts were, however, acquired at an early point in the Conway acquisition process – probably no later than the first decades of the seventeenth century, before the developments in Arabic studies spearheaded by Edward Pococke and others. John Selden's references to Averroes in *De jure naturali ac gentium* 1.9 reflect that new interest, since he not only refers to Arabic sources, but quotes from an Arabic manuscript recently donated to the Bodleian library by Archbishop Laud.[6] Selden's references occur in the course of a

[2] G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[3] Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[4] Eckhard Kessler, 'The Intellective Soul', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, E. Kessler and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 485–534; Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Martin Pine, *Pietro Pomponazzi: Radical Philosopher of the Renaissance* (Padua: Antenore, 1986).

[5] Armagh, Robinson Library, ms g.III.15. See Ian Roy, 'The Libraries of Edward, Second Viscount Conway, and Others. An Inventory and Valuation of 1643', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 41 (1968), pp. 35–46. Various writings by Averroes appear in sixteenth-century academic booklists. See E. S. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories: Book-Lists from Vice-Chancellor's Court Probate Inventories in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[6] John Selden, *De jure naturali ac gentium* (London: Richard Bishop, 1640), I. ix, pp. 109–116.

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discussion of the medieval debates surrounding the *intellectus agens*. He cites Arab thinkers to the effect that ratiocination was conceived as external to man. And he asserts that Averroes identified *intellectus agens* with the 'holy spirit'. Selden's only other reference to Averroes is a margin citation of his commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysica* and *De anima*.[7] Although Selden was evidently eager to display first-hand knowledge of sources in Arabic, his references to Averroes are hardly evidence that he knew his writings in any depth. Nevertheless, Selden represents a new, if rather specialist, scholarly interest in Arabic sources. It was probably the same kind of scholarly interest that lead Ralph Cudworth to acquire a 1501 Latin edition of Averroes's *Destructiones destructionum* (i.e., *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*: *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*) though we have no evidence that he read it.[8]

As their (latter-day) sobriquet implies, the Cambridge Platonists did not have a vested interest in Aristotle and his commentators. Their philosophical preference for Plato was itself symptomatic of the early modern reaction against the Aristotelian synthesis which had dominated European philosophy since the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, as philosophical theologians who were serious about a philosophical defence of religion, they were the heirs of a long-standing apologetic tradition which focused on the nature of the soul, and incorporated anti-Averroist arguments which may be traced back to Thomas Aquinas. In that respect, they are not untypical of early modern Christian apologists. Also, as Christian Platonists, they sit within a broadly syncretic tradition, whose major recent exponent, Marsilio Ficino, devoted considerable attention to Averroism in his *Theologia platonica.* Although the Cambridge Platonist response to Averroism is not, apparently, indebted to Ficino,[9] their Platonism nevertheless gives it a distinctive edge. For one thing, their syncretic tendency rendered them receptive to a range of different philosophies, even those which they saw as erroneous. Their own conception of universal spirit (More's Spirit of Nature and Cudworth's Plastic Nature) is susceptible to the charge that it is Averroes's active intellect by another name. However, neither More's Hylarcic Principle nor Cudworth's hypothesis of plastic nature supervene upon the individual soul. Neither More nor Cudworth denied personal immortality and both asserted the freedom of the individual human will. Thus parallels between plastic nature and *intellectus agens* do not seem to have been a serious issue for the

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[7] Ibid., pp. 113, 116, 112.

[8] Giosuè Musca lists *Destructiones Averroes cum Niphi expositione (litera antiqua)* (1501) (sic), in his, '"Omne genus animalium". Antichità e Medioevo in una biblioteca privata inglese del Seicento', *Quaderni Medievali*, 25 (1988), pp. 25–76 (61). Lack of evidence that Cudworth read this text does not mean that he did not do so. On Agostino Nifo's commentary on Averroes's *Destructio*, see Nicholas Holland's chapter in this volume.

[9] The direct influence of Ficino on the Cambridge Platonists was actually rather limited. See my 'Marsilio Ficino and Ralph Cudworth', in *The Rebirth of Platonic Philosophy*, ed. James Hankins (iTatti, forthcoming). Also, 'Henry More, Ficino and Plotinus: The Continuity of Renaissance Platonism', in *Forme del neoplatonismo: Dall'eredità ficiniana ai Platonici di Cambridge*, ed. Luisa Simonutti (Florence: Olschki, 2007), pp. 281–296. On Ficino's critique of Averroes's theory of the intellect, see Michael Allen's chapter in this volume.

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Cambridge Platonists, and on this account they were never accused of Averroism or proto-Averroism. Of more relevance – certainly to Henry More – was Aquinas's charge that Averroes's psychology entails too radical a separation of the intellectual soul from the other functions of the soul, and hence also from the body. In consequence, the *intellectus agens* is too easily separable from body. This is a charge Aquinas also levels at un-named 'Platonists', whose sharp dualism of soul and body he believed to be vulnerable to Averroistic errors. However, the Cambridge Platonists avoid this charge because their dualism is mitigated by a conception of the soul which emphasised empathy with the body. This is especially relevant in the case of Henry More whose anti-Averroist arguments, as we shall see, centre on the integration of soul and body, and therefore implicitly address Aquinas's objection. Another of Aquinas's objections to Averroism was the danger posed to Christian ethics of a theory which undermined the moral accountability of the individual soul. The Cambridge Platonists shared his ethical position, but although they defended freewill on ethical grounds, their anti-determinism was directed against Calvin and Hobbes rather than Averroes. Henry More, however, was certainly alive to the inherent determinism in naturalising interpretations of the *intellectus agens* by the likes of Pomponazzi and Cardano.

Ralph Cudworth

The major philosopher of the Cambridge Platonists was Ralph Cudworth. As already noted, he possessed a copy of Averroes's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. But he makes no direct references to Averroes in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), the only major work of his to be published in his lifetime.[10] He does, however, make (critical) mention of the Aristotelian conception of the active and passive intellect. Like his Cambridge Platonist colleagues, Cudworth subscribed to the benign, syncretist view that grains of truth may be found even in error. Accordingly, Cudworth takes a generally favourable view of Aristotle, notwithstanding that Aristotelianism had, by Cudworth's day, been discredited as an authoritative philosophy. Cudworth was well aware of the criticisms which had been levelled at Aristotelianism, but he nevertheless regarded Aristotle as theologically preferable to many other philosophers. He took the view that Aristotle's philosophy was 'right and sound' because it asserted 'Incorporeal Substance' to be 'a Deity distinct from the World, the Naturality of Morality, and Liberty of Will.'[11] He also took the view that Aristotle's acceptance of final causes rendered his philosophy 'more consistent with Piety than the Cartesian *Hypothesis* it self'. Cudworth was, however, critical of Aristotle for not stating more clearly his arguments for the immortality of the soul and the existence of providence.

[10] Although Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, did not appear until 1678, and his *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* was not published until long after his death, in 1731, Cudworth was already working on them before the Restoration.

[11] Ralph Cudworth, *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London: Richard Royston, 1678), p. 53.

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In keeping with his humanistic approach to ancient philosophy, Cudworth drew a distinction between Aristotle and his interpreters, and, as appropriate, sought to exonerate him from the errors perpetrated by his followers. The doctrine of the *intellectus agens* is a case in point, though he does not link it specifically to Averroes. In his (posthumously-published) *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, Cudworth defends Aristotle's theory of intellection, denying that it entails the derivation of abstract ideas from sense impressions through the operations of an 'agent intellect'. In so arguing he comes closer to pointing the finger at Averroes, but he does not in fact name him. In reference to Aristotle's distinction in *De anima* 3, between active intellect (*intellectus agens* or *nous poetikos*) and potential intellect (*intellectus possibilis* or *nous pathetikos)*, Cudworth attributes the doctrine of the 'agent intelligence' to later interpreters of Aristotle. In support of this view, he cites the early Greek interpreters, who, he argues, were in a better position to understand Aristotle's meaning. Although he implicitly acknowledges scope for confusion in interpreting this particular passage, he is singularly vague as to the interpreters he has in mind, whether Greek, or later interpreters. But it is evident that he regards this 'peripatetical' theory of intellection as an example of the same kind of erroneous thinking that puts matter before mind ('the same sottishness of mind that would make stupid and senseless matter the original source of all things').

> As for that opinion, that the conceptions of the mind and the intelligible ideas or reasons of the mind should be raised out of the phantasms by the strange chemistry of an agent intelligence: this as it is founded on a mistake of Aristotle's meaning, who never dreamed of any such chimerical agent intelligence, as appears from the Greek interpreters that best understood him so it is very like to that other opinion called peripatetical, that asserts the eduction of immaterial forms out of the power of matter. And as both of them arise from the same sottishness of mind that would make stupid and senseless matter the original source of all things, so there is the same impossibility in both, that perfection should be raised out of imperfection, and that vigour, activity and awakened energy, should ascend and emerge out of dull, sluggish, and drowsy passion.[12]

So far is Cudworth from condemning Aristotle, that he in fact notes a parallel between Aristotle's doctrine of the active intellect (properly understood) and his own epistemology which emphasises the key role of mind in the generation of knowledge:

> But indeed this opinion attributes as much activity to the mind, if at least the agent intelligence be part of it, *as ours doth*. As he would attribute as much activity to the sun, that should say the sun had a power of educing light out of night or the dark air, as he that should say the sun had a power of exerting light out of his own body. The former being but an improper way of expressing the same thing, which is properly signified in the latter way. But that other opinion, that asserts that the abstract and universal reasons of things as distinct from phantasms, are nothing else but mere names without any signification, is so ridiculously false, that it deserves no confutation at all. (my italics)[13]

[12] Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 82–83.

[13] Ibid., p. 84. For further discussion of Cudworth's use of Aristotle, see my 'Aristotle and the Cambridge Platonists: The Case of Cudworth', in *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Conversations with Aristotle*, eds Constance T. Blackwell and Sachiko Kusukawa (London: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 337–349.

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Cudworth, then, does not appear to have been unduly concerned about Averroism *per se*. He focused on Aristotle rather than his Commentator. His Cambridge colleagues shared his interest in *intellectus agens*, but they seem to have been more aware of potential problems with Averroes's conception of it.

John Smith and Nathaniel Culverwell

In his posthumously-published *Select Discourses*,[14] which was written before 1652, John Smith, like Cudworth, discusses the *intellectus agens* in relation to Aristotle. Section 8 of his 'Discourse on the Immortality of the Soul' discusses the *intellectus patiens* and *intellectus agens* of *De anima* 3. There is nothing specifically Averroistic about this. For Smith the concept of the *intellectus agens* is rich in possibilities as a means of explaining prophetic inspiration. Later in the same work, in his Discourse 'Of Prophesie' he describes the operations of the *intellectus agens*, 'When our Rational facultie being moved together with the Soul of the World, and filled with a divinely-inspired fury, doth predict those things that are to come.'[15] This is not, of course, an Averroist usage, but owes much to other traditions. It is notable that his comments show how it could be assimilated to a syncretic Platonism, for, on the authority of Philo, he rolled the '*Intellectus agens*' into a Platonist mould by representing it as 'the same with *Anima Mundi* or *Universal Soul*, as it is described by the *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists*.' Smith makes no more than passing reference to the Averroist conception of *intellectus agens* in his *Select Discourses*, but the reference is nonetheless important as an indicator of his primary association of Averroism with the doctrine of a single soul common to all human beings. He dismisses this doctrine as a mistaken interpretation of the *notiones communes* or common notions which are the same in all human beings.

Smith's Emmanuel College contemporary, Nathaniel Culverwell, explores similar territory, though giving more space to Averroes's doctrine of *intellectus agens*. Culverwell's *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, which was published posthumously in 1652, is also useful as an indicator of the kind of sources which were available for a knowledge of Averroism in mid-seventeenth-century England. In the ninth chapter, entitled 'The Light of Reason', Culverwell pauses to discuss the doctrine of the *active intellect* or *intellectus Agens* (separately from *intellectus patiens*). The context of his discussion is his broader investigation of the light of nature, and of human reason as the illuminator of the soul, or 'Candle of the Lord'. Averroes's active intellect attracted Culverwell's attention as an alternative theory of illumination of the human soul. He invokes it in order to clarify his own conception of the illuminating power of reason, which he conceives as internal to each individual soul. He identified the doctrine of the active intellect as an 'Oriental

[14] Smith's *Select Discourses* (London: James Flesher, 1660) were edited by John Worthington about a decade after his death.

[15] Ibid., p. 186.

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Invention', by 'those Arabian writers Averroes and Avicen'. His objection to it is that it undermines the personal soul. By this teaching, these Arabian philosophers replaced the 'the spirit of a man' or 'that *internal* reason which illuminates the soul' (hence his use of the biblical metaphor, 'Candle of the Lord') with illumination from an external source. Avicenna and Averroes, he writes, 'must needs have an Angel to hold the Candle to enlighten men in their choicest operations'.[16] The difference between the two is that Averroes holds there to be only one such source of illumination for all men: 'Averroes will allow but one Angel to superintend and prompt the whole Species of mankinde.' To Culverwell's mind, this reduces man to the status of passive instrument of an external 'intelligence'. Contrary to Culverwell's conception of man as an exalted, god-like being, Averroes's doctrine of the *intellectus agens* makes him 'the most imperfect and contemptible being that could be, totally dependant upon an Angel in his most essential workings; the whole sphere of his being was to be mov'd by an Intelligence'.[17]

Culverwell proceeds to list others affected by this error. The list includes Themistius, Plotinus and unspecified Platonists (who 'were alwayes so much conversant with spirits, which made their Philosophy ever question'd for a touch of Magick').[18] He also mentions Roger Bacon and Maimonides (the Jews would 'would fain perswade us that God himself is their *Intellectus Agens*'). 'Amongst fresher and more moderne writers,' he names Jacopo Zabarella, who, he claims, regarded 'God himself as the *Intellectus Agens* of the soul' – a position he arrives at, according to Culverwell, through a distorting reading of his 'master' Aristotle. The chief modern villain named is Girolamo Cardano, whose most 'prodigious error' was his 'bruitish conceit' that human intellect is no different from that of animals – the only difference being the receptivity of humans to the active intelligence. This list of sources indicates that Culverwell was aware of sympathetic readers of Averroes (Zabarella, Cardano).[19] However, although he apparently had direct knowledge of the writings of Zabarella (*De mente agente*) and Maimonides (*Guide of the Perplexed*), his knowledge of Averroes seems to have been obtained at second hand, chiefly from Scaliger (*Exotericae exercitationes*)[20] and John Selden (*De jure naturali ac gentium*).[21] His critique of the Averroist error is mitigated by his view that 'buried in that heap of Errours' is the truth 'That God himself … [doth] constantly assist the understanding with a Proportionable Co-operation.'[22] Indeed God may illuminate the soul more fully, through revelation or prophecy.

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[16] Nathaniel Culverwell, *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, eds Robert A. Greene and Hugh McCallum (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p. 68.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., pp. 68–69.

[19] Ibid. Zabarella, *De mente agente* in *De rebus naturalibus* (1604). On Averroistic motives in Cardano, see Valverde's chapter in this volume.

[20] Culverwell, *Light*, p. 68; Julius Caesar Scaliger, *Exotericarum exercitationum liber XV de subtilitate ad Hieronymum Cardanum* (Paris: Michel Vasconsan, 1557).

[21] Selden, *De jure naturali ac gentium*, I.ix (116n.).

[22] Culverwell, *Light*, p. 70.

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Henry More

The only one of the Cambridge Platonists to devote sustained attention to Averroism was Henry More, whose writings contain many more references to Averroism than may be found among the rest of the Cambridge Platonists combined.[23] Where Cudworth's syncretism rendered him more likely to take a generous view of philosophical errors which came close to what he understood as the truth, Henry More was decidedly cautious about analogues to true Christian philosophy, especially his own. As with Culverwell, Smith and Cudworth, More's conception of Averroism is both reductive and unspecific: what he identified as Averroism amounts largely to the doctrine of the *intellectus agens* which he elides with the problem of a single, universal soul. Nevertheless, as compared with the other Cambridge Platonists, there are striking differences in how he regarded Averroism. For he saw it as a serious problem – at least in his earlier works. He also associates the Averroistic conception of the *intellectus agens* with naturalistic interpretations of Aristotle, particularly with Pomponazzi, but also Vanini and Cardano.

Averroism figures in several of More's books, particularly his early writings. References to Averroism occur in his earliest collection of poems, *Psychodia Platonica* (1642) (republished in *Philosophical Poems*, 1647) and in the most important philosophical work of his early maturity, his *Immortality of the Soul* (1659), as well as his major work of theology, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660). The presence of Averroistic themes in the poems with which he made his publishing debut as well as in the philosophical works published in the 1650s makes Averroism one of the continuities which bridges the generic divide between the poems of his youth and his later philosophical prose writings. However, Averroism does not appear to be an issue in More's later philosophical works, namely those published after 1662: *Divine Dialogues* (1668), *Enchiridion metaphysicum* (1671) and *Enchiridion ethicum* (1667).

A peculiarity of More's direct references to Averroes is that he calls him 'Avenroes'. This mis-nomer probably derives from William Bedwell, the English Arabic scholar, who refers to Averroes as 'Aben Rhoi'.[24] More's first reference to 'Avenroes' occurs in the fourth poem in his *Psychodia Platonica* (1642).[25] This is his

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[23] Why this should be so, given the Christian Platonism which they shared, may be an individual matter. But it may also reflect a difference of emphasis owing to their college backgrounds: all except for More were trained at Emmanuel College. The only study which discusses More's Averroism is David Leech, '*No Spirit, No God': An Examination of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More's Defence of Soul as a Bulwark against Atheism*' (PhD Thesis, Cambridge, 2006), to which I wish to acknowledge my debt, though we differ in our assessment of the influence of Plotinus on More.

[24] Alastair Hamilton, *William Bedwell the Arabist* (Leiden: Brill, 1985). Examples of Bedwell's usage of the term may be found in the documents printed on pp. 107, 109 and 115.

[25] Henry More, *Psychodia Platonica, or, A Platonicall Song of the Soul* (Cambridge, 1642). Reprinted in *Philosophical Poems* (Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1647).

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Antimonopsychia or Confutation of the Unitie of Souls, in which he sets out to refute 265
'The all-devouring Unity/ Of souls,' an opinion which he attributes to 'That Learned 266
Arab hight Aven-Roe' (Stanza 7). More again refers to Averroes as 'Aven-roes' in 267
his *Of the Immortality of the Soul* (1659), this time in passing reference to the 268
Averroist conception of planetary intelligences, and in the course of an account of 269
Fazio Cardano's story of encountering an Averroist spirit. An additional reference 270
to the 'Aven-roists' appears the version published in More's *A Collection of Several* 271
Philosophical Writings, in 1662, and this version of the name is retained in the Latin 272
translation of his works, his *Opera omnia* (1678). 273

There are also places in More's writings where he clearly has Averroism in mind, 274
although he does not identify it as such or mention Averroes by name. For example, 275
in his *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660), More identifies a 276
form of atheism associated with Aristotelianism. These 'Aristotelean' atheists deny 277
particular providence and ascribe God's governance of earthly affairs to the 278
'*Influence* of the *Celestial Bodies*, actuated by the *Intelligences* appertaining to each 279
Sphere.' The proponents of this view named by More are the 'witty fools' 280
Pomponazzi and Vanini, the latter of whom compounds his error by amalgamating 281
the workings of the separate intelligences into one 'Soul of the Heavens' which 282

> will serve as effectually to do all these things as the *Aristotelean Intelligences*; and therefore 283
> ever & anon doubts of those, and establisheth this as the onely Intellectual or Immaterial 284
> Principle and highest Deity.[26] 285

By explaining the powers of this intelligence in 'a natural way by Periodical 286
Influences of the Heavenly Bodies,' Vanini in effect circumscribes the power of God 287
within the limits of nature: 288

> he has imprisoned the Divinity in those upper rooms for fear of the worst, that he may be as 289
> far out of his reach as the Earth is from the Moon.[27] 290

More believed that the source of Vanini's views was another Italian, namely 'that 291
odd and crooked Writer *Hieronymus Cardanus*'.[28] Later in the same book, the same 292
concern relating to the Averroist doctrine of the agent intellect and the celestial 293
intelligences recurs in the context of More's refutation of astrology. These chapters 294
were republished in 1681 with the title, *Tetractys anti-astrologica* in response to 295
John Butler's *A Vindication of Astrology*, i.e., his *Agiastrologia* [*agia-astrologia*], 296
or The Most Sacred and Divine Science of Astrology (London, 1680). 297

The dominant concern of More's engagement with Averroes is the doctrine of 298
'Unity of souls' or 'monopsychism'. This is the subject of *Antimonopsychia*, the 299
shortest of the four long philosophical poems published in his *Philosophical Poems*. 300
The connecting motif of these early poems is the central theme of the immortality of 301
the soul. They celebrate the life of the soul (the subject of the first and longest poem, 302

[26] More, *An Explanation*, p. 335.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., section 4.

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Psychozoia) and they counter doctrines which deny or threaten that life: the erroneous doctrines on which he focuses in the other poems are, besides monopsychism, mortalism, soul-sleeping and materialism. To More, these doctrines are inter-related by virtue of the fact that they all deny the immortality of the soul, and they do so in analogous ways. The erroneous conception of the soul with which More most associated monopsychism was mortalism, which is the subject of the previous poem, *Antipsychopannychia, A Confutation of the sleep of the SOUL after death*. In *Antipsychopannychia*, More sets out to show that 'no souls die' (l.3). Of course, Averroes's *intellectus agens* does not entail the annihilation of the soul on death, but it does entail that only a part of the soul survives the death of the body, namely, the intellect. This is not immortality in a personal sense, there being only one single intellect common to all. Averroes's denial of personal immortality therefore amounts to the annihilation of the individual at the point of death: 'For if one onely soul act in every body, what ever we are now, surely this body laid in the dust we shall be nothing.'[29] More was prepared to accept that monopsychism was 'more tenable' than materialism, since it does, after all, posit the existence of soul, and indeed immortality of a sort. (In fact there are strong parallels with his own universal spirit, the 'Spirit of Nature'). However, even if monopsychism is more refined than materialism or mortalism, that doesn't change the fact that like them, its fatal denial of personal immortality leads to atheism, 'to the subversion of all the Fundamentals of Religion and Piety amongst men.'[30] Averroes's conception of the soul is, therefore, a problem to be confronted by all proponents of personal immortality.

In his poem *Antimonopsychia* More sets out to refute the doctrine that 'there is but one soul; and [that] sense, understanding and motion be acts of this one soul informing severall bodies.'[31] He does so by making the case for the multiplicity of souls, the unity of the soul, and the individuality of each soul. His first step is to establish the plurality of souls, by presenting arguments against,

> … the Souls strange solitude
> That there is not one onely soul. (Stanza 10)

More lists many absurdities which arise from positing a single soul for all human beings, e.g., that the same soul will hold as many contradictory opinions as there are philosophers who share it. Every individual will be guilty of all the sins committed by other people. There will be no free will, and living things will be reduced to empty shells, filled with universal intellect:

> Thoughts good and bad that Universall mind
> Must take upon it self; and every ill,
> That is committed by all humane kind,
> They are that souls. Alas, we have no will,

[29] More, *Antipsychopannychia*, Preface.

[30] More, *Immortality of the Soul*, Preface, section 10.

[31] More, *Antipsychopannychia*, Preface. All references to More's *Immortality* are from the version published in his *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (London: James Flesher, 1662), in which each constituent text is separately paginated.

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No free election, nor yet any skill,
But are a number of dull stalking trees
That the universall Intellect doth fill
With its own life and motion: what it please
That there it acts. What strange absurdities are these? (Stanza 9)

Since Averroes's version of monopsychism entailed complete separation of intellect from the rest of the soul and body, More's counter-argument invests a great deal in demonstrating the unity of the soul and to arguing that the soul never entirely loses recollection of sensation or of its own thinking processes. Central to his case are the soul's self-awareness and memory. On the basis of an appeal to common experience, More argues that each individual is only aware of his own soul, and not of himself as part of a universal soul. This self-awareness or consciousness (though he does not use that term) is not confined to the intellective soul, but extends to both its sensitive and rational aspects. Another aspect of self-awareness is memory. Without it the soul could remember nothing of its former life, will mistakenly believe itself to be newly created and therefore would not understand the moral consequences of its actions in it (Stanza 2). This is primarily a moral argument. But memory also has a unifying function, since its operation, like self-awareness in effect binds the intellect to the lower functions of the soul. More calls Memory 'the watchman of the soul' (stanza 33) because it observes all its functions, 'phansie', 'sense' and 'cogitation'. Since memory is, furthermore, 'the very bond of life' (stanza 32), as he puts it, which unites soul to the experience of the individual body: it is memory which makes us who we are, differentiating us from other souls. Thus, in this poem More counters monopsychism with a conception of the soul in which the soul is a composite of intellectual and sensitive functions, in which consciousness, memory and self-awareness are key to its unity, and thereby to its individuality. For this, as for the account of the soul in *Psychozoia* he was indebted to Plotinus's theory of the tricentric soul, a unified composite of 'one nature in many powers' (*Enneads* 9.2.5). Plotinus also conceives of Memory as the foundation of individual identity (*Enneads* 4.3.27), and of the soul as conscious of its operations – thinking entails self-reflection (*Enneads* 9.1.2).[32] More's anti-Averroist argument for the unity of the soul, then, draws on Plotinus in order to advance an idea of individuality or personhood – something which he develops further in *Immortality of the Soul*.

Ipseity or Personality

The anti-Averroist arguments from More's poems are recapitulated in his *Immortality of the Soul* where (with cross-references to the arguments in his poems)[33] he takes issue, above all, with the doctrine that, as he puts it, 'one Universal Soule … hears,

[32] For further discussion, see Pauline Remes, *Neoplatonism* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), and Eyjólfur Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

[33] More, *Immortality of the Soul*, Preface and p. 212.

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sees and reasons in every man.' To the arguments already advanced in his poems, he adds a few more for good measure. Many of these additional arguments concern the absurdities that arise if a single common soul is posited for all human beings – for example if mathematicians and fools had a common intellect, fools would be wise and intelligent, and 'one man will be all men, and all men but one individual man,' which 'is a perfect contradiction to all the Laws of *Metaphysics* and *Logick*.'[34] In Book 3 chapter 16, specifically targets the doctrine of the World Soul and Pomponazzi's theory of the celestial intelligences (*De immortalitate anima*, ch. 14). Here he also develops the idea which he had proposed in *Antimonopsychia*, that individual souls are unified and differentiated by the soul's self-awareness, or, as he puts it, the soul's being 'conscious to her self of her own perceptions.' A significant difference from his account of the soul's self-awareness in the poems is that in *Immortality of the Soul* he does not focus on memory as a separate function of the soul, but subsumes it within the idea of consciousness or 'animadversion', as he now calls it. The soul's self-awareness, or consciousness, then, is the essence of individuality, that is to say 'every man's personal *Ipseity*.' And the perceptions of which the soul is aware include both thoughts and sensations:

> a Man is most properly that, whatever it is, that *animadverts* in him; for that is such an operation that no Being but himself can doe it for him. And that which *animadverts* in us, does not onely perceive and take notice of its *Intellectual* and *Rational* operations, but of all *Sensations* whatsoever that we are conscious of, whether they terminate in our Body or on some outward Object … From whence it is plain, *That which we are* is both *Sensitive* and *Intellectual*.[35]

'*Animadversion*' is the defining characteristic of the individual human soul and the key to its unity: 'the true and usual Notion of the Unity of a Soul', according to More is that 'it mainly consists in this, that the *Animadversive* thereof is *but one*, and that there is no *Sensation* nor *Perception* of any kind in the Soul, but what is communicated and perceived by the whole *Animadversive*'.[36] It is, therefore, 'quite repugnant to the Idea of the *Unity* of the Soul not to be conscious to herself of her own perceptions'.[37]

It is tempting to see the influence of Cartesianism here, and to suggest that that More was recasting his argument by reference to Descartes's conception of the individual soul as *res cogitans*. After all, at this time his enthusiasm for Cartesianism had not yet been tempered by the doubts about its atheistic implications which characterise his later work.[38] More had first celebrated Descartes's philosophy in another of his poems, *Democritus Platonissans* (which was added to the collection of his poems in 1647), while in the Preface to *Immortality of the Soul* he famously recommended 'reading of Des Cartes in all publick Schools or Universities').[39] However, the [AU2]

[34] Ibid., p. 213.

[35] More, *Immortality*, p. 212.

[36] Ibid., p. 212.

[37] Ibid., p. 213.

[38] Alan Gabbey, '"Philosophia cartesiana triumphata", Henry More, 1646–71', in *Problems in Cartesianism*, eds Thomas M. Lennon, John M. Nicholas, and John W. Davis (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press: 1982), pp. 171–509.

[39] More, *Immortality*, Preface, section 15.

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conception of the soul and of individual identity to which the quotation above refers entails far more than cogitation. The self-awareness of the soul includes awareness of sensation, such that for More the soul is more properly *res percipiens*, something which perceives or is cognisant. As we have just noted, conscious soul is aware of both thoughts and sensation. It follows therefore, that our individual identity is composite: 'That which we are is both *Sensitive* and *Intellectual*.'[40] These features of More's conception of the soul point, once again, to Plotinus. More's observations about consciousness and identity ('animadversion' and 'ipseity') echo Plotinus argument that it is the soul's experience of the body which individuates it. By dissolving the link between soul and body, monopsychism removes the essential basis of personal identity:

> So soon as this Body of his [a man's] is dissipated and dissolved, that she [the soul] will no longer raise such determinate Thoughts or Senses that refer to that Union; and that so the Memory of such Actions, Notions, Impressions, that were held together in relation to a particular Body, being lost and laid aside upon the failing of the Body to which they did refer, this *Ipseity* or *Personality*, which consisted mainly in this, does necessarily perish in death.[41]

Descartes's radical separation of mind and body does not satisfactorily explain how mind interacts with body, or how, after the separation of soul and body at death, the soul bears any stamp of individuality. David Leech has drawn attention to the fact that Descartes's *res cogitans* is 'quasi Averroistic' since it offers no obvious means of accounting for personal immortality, and that More may have had Pomponazzi and Vanini in mind when expressing concerns about atheism in his correspondence with Descartes.[42] A major theme of that correspondence is the insufficiency of the Cartesian *res cogitans* as a definition of the mind or soul. More's insistence, in his letters to Descartes that extension is a property of immaterial substance as well as of matter, is echoed in *Immortality* 3.16, when he commends the 'Notion … that proportions the Soul to the dimensions of the Body'.[43] This is consistent to his view that the soul, while immaterial in itself, is always in a sense embodied – as in the Neoplatonic doctrine of the vehicle of the soul, which he develops in his *Conjectura Cabalistica* (1653). Rather than drawing on Descartes to construct a notion of personal identity, More draws on Neoplatonism to construct a conception of personal identity in opposition to the Averroist monopsychism and in terms which are consistent with his epistolary critique of Cartesianism.

The Immortality of the Soul marks the point in More's career where his attentions turned from older forms of atheism associated with the Aristotelian tradition to the new philosophies of Descartes, Hobbes and (in due course) Spinoza. The absence of references to Averroes in More's later writings would seem to indicate that the focus of his concerns shifted in his later writings as he turned his attention to meet these new challenges. From this point of view, Averroism came to seem less important to

[40] Ibid., p. 212.

[41] Ibid., p. 214.

[42] Leech, '"No spirit, no god"', p. 164.

[43] More, *Immortality*, p. 215.

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More by comparison with more modern forms of philosophical atheism. However, in many ways the quarrels he had with modern philosophy recapitulate the concerns raised by Averroism, particularly the question of personal immortality, for which he believed that neither Cartesianism, Hobbism, nor Spinozism could satisfactorily account. A cognate misconception was 'Sadducism', or the denial of the existence of immaterial souls.[44] Already in his earliest writings, monopsychism, or the doctrine of the 'all-devouring Unity/Of Souls' exemplifies a type of problem which recurs in several guises, principally heterodox theories that deny the personal immortality of the soul. Averroism may therefore be seen as a presentiment of later philosophical foes. Thus, the disappearance of Averroism from More's later writings may be explained as a subsuming of Averroism (or rather, what Averroism represented for More) within other manifestations of generic philosophico-theological problems. More's central pre-occupation, throughout his intellectual career was, after all, to combat philosophical atheism. This is the continuing motif which connects his earliest writings to his mature philosophy, though the means by which he pursued it were developed and modified considerably. He never ceased to defend the immortality of the soul and he continued to refine and strengthen his apologetic arguments. After 1662, and especially in his *Enchiridion metaphysicum*, the central theme of his philosophy is his conception of the Spirit of Nature or Hylarchic Principle.

Tracing the undercurrents of Averroism in More's later writings is beyond the scope of this chapter. But we have identified one distinctive concept which may be said to have been developed in response to Averroism and that is the notion of identity and person through which he constructed a refutation of monopsychism. It was Platonism, in the wider sense which included 'Deep Plotin's lore', which afforded him a means of refuting the Averroist doctrine of the single universal soul.[45] Since Averroism is given most extensive treatment in the early writings where he first declared himself a Platonist, Averroism (or rather the implications of his *intellectus agens*) may be understood as a significant factor in determining More's philosophical preference for Platonism.

Conclusion

On the evidence which I have here presented, the Cambridge Platonists bear testimony to continuing awareness of Averroes's philosophy in seventeenth-century England. In all but one case, Averroism does not appear to have been of significant

[44] The term 'Sadducism' was used by Joseph Glanvill, who shared More's interest in paranormal phenomena. See *A Blow at Modern Sadducism in some Philosophical Considerations about Witchcraft* (London: James Collins, 1668); Glanvill, *Sadducismus Triumphatus: Of Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches, with a Letter of Dr H. More on the Same Subject* (London: James Collins, 1681).

[45] David Leech argues that More's Platonist conception of the soul underwent a process of development and refinement between his earlier and later writings, becoming less indebted to Plotinus, and more to Iamblichus and others. Leech *'No Spirit, No God'*.

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interest to any of them. The exception, however, is Henry More, who, while he can hardly be said to have been preoccupied with Averroes, regarded him as sufficiently important to warrant a refutation. Furthermore, More's concern with Averroism offers important insights into More's early thought, and his reception of Cartesianism and other philosophies. Finally, his engagement with the Averroism illustrates how philosophical debate contributes to conceptual development – in his case a theory of personal identity founded on consciousness. The Plotinian psychology with which he sought to combat it, bears comparison with Cudworth's account of the soul and points towards Locke. The Cambridge Platonists certainly do not fit the Renan-Pintard view that Averroism was a force for modernisation by contributing to the secularisation of philosophy, though interestingly More regarded it as the resort of 'Libertines'. The libertines he had in mind were the Paduan Averroists, Pomponazzi and Vanini, those he regarded as promoters of 'Aristotelean atheism'. In More's view Averroism is 'the handsomest Hypothesis that they can frame in favour of themselves.' By comparison with straightforwardly materialist philosophies (like Hobbism), the distorted immaterialism of monopsychism, presented a greater challenge, because it is 'farre beyond that dull conceit, *That there is nothing but meer Matter in the World;* which is infinitely more lyable to confutation.' The insidious appeal of monopsychism to the libertine is that he might delude himself with the comfort that his wicked behaviour in earthly life would be drowned in oblivion in the afterlife:

> that so soon as this Body of his is dissipated and dissolved, that she will no longer raise any such determinate Thoughts or Senses that referre to that Union, and that so the Memory of such Actions, Notions and Impressions, that were held together in relation to a particular Body, being lost and laid aside upon the failing of the Body to which they did referre, this *Ipseity* or *Personality* which consisted mainly in this, does necessarily perish in death. This certainly is that (if they know their own meaning) which many Libertines would have, who are afraid to meet themselves in the other World, for fear they should quarrel with themselves there for their transactions in this.[46]

[46] *Immortality,* p. 214.

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Chapter 11
Reconsidering the Case of Elijah Delmedigo's Averroism and Its Impact on Spinoza

Carlos Fraenkel

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Elijah Delmedigo (d. 1493) has been called 'the foremost Jewish Averroist of the Renaissance.'[1] He remained faithful to the medieval Islamic and Jewish rationalist tradition that he saw embodied, above all, in the works of Averroes and Maimonides, even when Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, his most brilliant Italian student, turned away from the austere rationalism of his teacher.[2] Pico's imagination had been captured by Neoplatonism and Kabbalah, both of which Delmedigo dismissed as an amalgam of fanciful doctrines without serious philosophical content.[3] In vain he tried to persuade Pico to return to what he considered the firm philosophical grounds laid by Averroes.[4]

[1] Alfred Ivry, 'Remnants of Jewish Averroism in the Renaissance', in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard D. Cooperman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 243–265 (250). For overviews of Delmedigo's life and works, see David M. Geffen, 'Insights into the Life and Thought of Elijah Del Medigo Based on His Published and Unpublished Works', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 61–62 (1973–1974), pp. 69–86 and J. J. Ross, 'Introduction', in Elijah Delmedigo, *Sefer behinat ha-dat*, critical edition with introduction and commentary by J. J. Ross (Tel Aviv: Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies, 1984) (Hebrew).

[2] On Delmedigo and Pico, see Alberto Bartòla, 'Eliyhau del Medigo e Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: La testimonianza dei codici vaticani', *Rinascimento*, 33 (1993), pp. 253–278.

[3] This is a simplification. At times Delmedigo seems to distinguish between contemporary pseudo-Kabbalah and a true ancient core; see Kalman Bland, 'Elijah del Medigo's Averroist Response to the Kabbalahs of Fifteenth-Century Jewry and Pico della Mirandola', *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 1 (1991), pp. 23–53.

[4] See Delmedigo's unpublished letter to Pico, Ms Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin 6508, 71^{a}–77^{b}.

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The medieval rationalist tradition shaped not only Delmedigo's philosophical outlook, but also his interpretation of Judaism, set out in *Sefer behinat ha-dat* ('The Examination of Religion'), a philosophical-theological treatise written towards the end of his life. In this text, his conception of the relationship between philosophy and religion is clearly based on Averroes and Maimonides. In the scholarly literature, however, one finds persistently reiterated the view that Delmedigo adopted a 'double truth' doctrine, allegedly set forth by Christian Averroists. Other scholars insist on Delmedigo's orthodox Averroism, but do not offer a satisfactory explanation of the passages in *Behinat ha-dat* and elsewhere that seem to support the 'double truth' thesis.

In the first part of this chapter I intend to revisit the 'double truth' issue. Leaving aside the question of whether any medieval philosopher actually endorsed such a doctrine, I will argue that Delmedigo clearly did not. His stance on the relationship between philosophy and religion fundamentally agrees with that of Averroes, according to which 'the truth does not contradict the truth' (*al-Ḥaqq lā yuḤādd al-Ḥaqq*).[5] This does not mean that Delmedigo simply applied an Averroistic framework to Judaism. Rather, Delmedigo's position shows considerable originality and is best described as the outcome of a critical dialogue with both Averroes and Maimonides. Reading Delmedigo as a *critical* student of Averroes and Maimonides is sufficient to account for the novel aspects of his position, including the passages in his work that allegedly reflect a 'double truth' doctrine. Moreover, whereas we know that Delmedigo closely studied Averroes and Maimonides, there is no evidence that his views on the relationship between philosophy and religion were significantly influenced by Christian sources.

My second aim in this paper is to revisit the question of Delmedigo's influence on Spinoza.[6] There is, I argue, a distinctly Averroistic side to the way Spinoza conceives of the relationship between philosophy and religion before working out the critique of religion in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. The *Tractatus* in a sense radicalises the stance on philosophy and religion set forth by Averroes in his chief philosophical-theological work, the *FaḌl al-maqāl* ('Decisive Treatise'). It is highly

[5] Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl* (*Decisive Treatise*), ed. George Hourani with corrections by Muhsin Mahdi, Eng. trans. Charles Butterworth (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), pp. 8–9 (in the edition I use, the pagination of the Arabic text and the English translation are the same). Hebrew trans. and ed. N. Golb in 'The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' "Fasl Al-Maqâl"', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 25 (1956), pp. 91–113; 26 (1957), pp. 41–64. As Richard Taylor pointed out, Averroes is likely alluding to Aristotle's claim in the *Prior Analytics* that the truth "must in every respect agree with itself" (I, 32; 47a8-9), a claim on which he elaborates in the Middle Commentary on the *Prior Analytics* and in the Long Commentary on the *De Anima*. See Taylor, "'Truth Does Not Contradict Truth': Averroes and the Unity of Truth," *Topoi* 19 (2000), pp. 3–16. It is possible that Delmedigo and Spinoza were aware of Averroes's discussions of the *Prior Analytics* passage. However, the main Averroistic source for their views on the relationship between philosophy and religion is surely the *FaḌl al-maqāl*.

[6] This part is mostly based on Carlos Fraenkel, 'Spinoza on Philosophy and Religion: The Averroistic Sources', in *The Rationalists: Between Tradition and Innovation*, eds Carlos Fraenkel, Dario Perinetti, and Justin Smith (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), pp. 58–81.

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likely that Spinoza was familiar with Averroes's claims in the form in which they were taken up by Delmedigo. Clarifying Delmedigo's relationship to Averroes will thus also help to shed light on what may be called Spinoza's Averroism. The only scholar who has dealt with this issue is Leon Roth, in a paper published in 1922. Roth, I will argue, misunderstood Delmedigo and as a consequence misrepresented his influence on Spinoza.

Religion as an Imitation of Philosophy: Al-Fārābī, Averroes, and Maimonides[7]

The standard view of medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophers is that the content of their religious traditions, taken literally, is a replacement for philosophy, devised by philosophers to educate and guide non-philosophers.[8] Taken allegorically, on the other hand, it corresponds to the doctrines demonstrated in philosophy. Religion's authority thus depends on the assumption that the teachings of religion are true on the allegorical level. This interpretation of religion was first worked out by the Muslim philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 950). According to al-Fārābī, 'religion' (*milla*) is an 'imitation of philosophy' (*muĐākiya li'l-falsafa*).[9] Hence religion

> comes after philosophy, in general, since it aims simply to instruct the multitude (*ta'alīm al-jumhūr*) in theoretical and practical matters that have been inferred in philosophy in such a way as to enable the multitude to understand them by persuasion or imaginative representation, or both.[10]

The difference between the philosopher and the prophet comes down to this: The prophet, in addition to intellectual perfection, also has the skills of an orator, poet and legislator, which allow him to translate philosophical insights into a language and a set of practical rules accessible to non-philosophers. Religion is thus integrated into a philosophical framework as a pedagogical-political program for non-philosophers. One implication of this view is that a religious text, if understood

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[7] The following section partially summarises Carlos Fraenkel, 'Philosophy and Exegesis in Al-Fārābī, Averroes, and Maimonides', *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*, 64 (2008), pp. 105–125.

[8] For related controversies in modern scholarship, see Akasoy in this volume.

[9] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb taḥṣìl al-saʿāda* ('The Attainment of Happiness'), ed. Jaʿfar Āl Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1981), p. 185; English trans. Muhsin Mahdi in *Al-Farabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 44. Al-Fārābī's most elaborate discussion of religion is the *Kitāb al-milla* (*Book of Religion*), ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1968); English trans. Charles Butterworth in *The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[10] Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-ḥurūf = Alfarabi's Book of Letters: Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1969); English trans. of Book 2 in *Medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Muhammad Khalidi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), secs 142–143.

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literally, is similar but not identical to the philosophical doctrines it imitates. If understood as an allegorical representation, however, it can be translated, as it were, into these doctrines by means of allegorical interpretation. A standard example from the medieval Islamic and Jewish context is scripture's description of God as a king, which is seen as a pedagogically useful metaphorical imitation of the philosophical doctrine of God occupying the first rank in the hierarchy of existents. The notion of a king conveys an approximate idea of God's rank to non-philosophers, who cannot understand the ontological order but do understand the political order.[11] Taken literally, the representation of God as a king is pedagogically and politically useful but not true; allegorically, on the other hand, it is true but not pedagogically and politically useful. The two most prominent proponents of this interpretation of religion at the end of the early medieval period were the Muslim philosopher Averroes (d. 1198) and the Jewish philosopher Maimonides (d. 1204), who were also the last important representatives of the Aristotelian school in Muslim Spain. Each worked out an interpretation of his religion (that is, of Islam or Judaism respectively) as a philosophical religion, on the basis of al-Fārābī's model for conceiving the relationship between philosophy and religion.

One difference in their interpretation, however, must be addressed, for it is important to understand how both Delmedigo and Spinoza later appropriated the concept of a philosophical religion. Whereas for Averroes the true doctrines constituting the allegorical content of scripture must remain the exclusive domain of the philosophers, who have the intellectual capacity to understand them, for Maimonides they can and must be made at least partly accessible to non-philosophers as well: through religious legislation and allegorical interpretation. The importance of this difference between Maimonides and Averroes was already noted by Shlomo Pines. According to Pines, on this point Maimonides was influenced by the theology of the Almohads, the North African Berbers who conquered Spain in the twelfth century and 'compelled all their subjects to profess an official theology.' This theology was derived from the system of the *mutakallimūn*, 'who were the official theologians of the Almohad kingdom.'[12] Maimonides seems to have thought that all members of the religious community can be *habituated* to true opinions – the doctrine of God's incorporeality for instance – by means of religious legislation. These true opinions

[11] See e.g. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-sa„āda*, Ar., p. 185; Eng., p. 45, quoted by Averroes in *Commentary on Plato's* Republic, Hebrew trans. Samuel ben Judah of Marseilles, ed. with English trans. Erwin I. J. Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); new English trans. Ralph Lerner as *Averroes on Plato's* Republic (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 30. Cf. Maimonides, *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn* (*Guide of the Perplexed*), ed. Salomon Munk and Issachar Yoel (Jerusalem: Yunovits, 1931); *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, Hebrew trans. Samuel ibn Tibbon, ed. Yehuda Even-Shmuel (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1987); *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, 2 vols (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963). In particular, see, *Guide of the Perplexed* (I, 8–9), I, pp. 33–35.

[12] Shlomo Pines, 'Translator's Introduction', in Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, I, pp. cxviii-cxix. To date the most detailed treatment of the Almohad elements in Maimonides's thought is Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For further references see Akasoy in this volume.

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must then be reconciled with scripture through allegorical interpretation.[13] In this respect, therefore, Maimonides deviates from the standard conception of the relationship between philosophy and religion in early medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy. Because of Maimonides's enormous impact on subsequent Jewish philosophy, however, his version was adopted by most Jewish philosophers from the thirteenth century to the early modern period. This explains why philosophical commentaries on the Bible, for example, became one of the main genres of Jewish philosophy throughout this period. But from the point of view of an Averroist, Maimonides's project leads to a problematic amalgamation of philosophy and the historical forms of religion, for Maimonides introduces philosophy into jurisprudence and Biblical interpretation, i.e., into religious disciplines in which for Averroes it is completely out of place.[14]

Let me briefly examine how Averroes argues for keeping philosophy and the historical forms of religion apart in the *Faṣl al-maqāl*. In contrast to Latin Averroists, Averroes holds that no genuine contradiction between philosophy and religion can exist. Islam contains the truth and exhorts all Muslims to pursue it:

> Since this Law (*sharī'a*) is true and calls to the reflection leading to cognition of the truth, we, the Muslim community, know firmly that demonstrative reflection cannot lead to something differing with what is set down in the Law. For the truth does not contradict the truth (*al-ḥaqq lā yuḍādd al-ḥaqq*); rather, it agrees with and bears witness to it.[15]

Averroes, of course, knows that this cannot be the case if the *sharī'a* is understood literally. For then it contains much that is at odds with what philosophy demonstrates. The reason for this is that for Averroes, as for al-Fārābī, there is an important 'difference in human nature' (*ikhtilāf fiṭrat al-nās*), namely, that which exists between philosophers and non-philosophers, and the divine Law is addressed to all Muslims, not only to the philosophers among them.[16] To achieve this, the prophet proceeds as follows. For one thing, he calls the philosophers to pursue true knowledge on the basis of demonstrations. In addition, he translates this knowledge by means of dialectical and rhetorical arguments, as well as poetic representations into a language accessible to non-philosophers. As a consequence, contradictions arise between the literal sense of the divine Law and the doctrines demonstrated by the philosophers. These contradictions can be solved, according to Averroes, through

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[13] See in particular, Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (I, 35), I, pp. 79–81.

[14] For a detailed discussion of Maimonides's peculiar position and its impact on later Jewish philosophy, see Carlos Fraenkel, 'Legislating Truth: Maimonides, the Almohads, and the Thirteenth-Century Jewish Enlightenment', in *Studies in the History of Culture and Science: A Tribute to Gad Freudenthal* 2011, eds Resianne Fontaine, Ruth Glasner, Reimund Leicht and Giuseppe Veltri (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 209–231.

[15] Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 9–10. Strictly speaking, the view that the truth of philosophy does not contradict the truth of religion is also compatible with the weaker claim, proposed for instance by Thomas Aquinas, that revelation contains truths that neither contradict philosophy, nor are accessible to it.

[16] Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, p. 10.

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'exegesis' (*ta'wīl*), which discloses the 'allegorical sense' (*bāṭin*) of the divine Law.[17] The decisive point for my present purpose is that allegorical exegesis is permitted only to philosophers according to Averroes. The difference between philosophers and non-philosophers with respect to the truth is thus twofold: Only the philosophers have access to the truth through scientific demonstrations, and only the philosophers have access to the allegorical sense of the divine Law. For Averroes, pointing out in public that the literal sense of the divine Law is false and disclosing its allegorical sense would precisely undermine the intention of the prophet, who concealed the allegorical sense because of the 'difference in human nature'. Averroes explains this by drawing an analogy between the role of the medical doctor and the role of the lawgiver, in which he opposes the lawgiver to a person who intends to disclose the allegorical content of the divine Law:

> Here is a parable of these people's intention as contrasted to the intention of the Lawgiver (*al-shāri'*): Someone intends [to go] to a skilled physician who intends to preserve the health of all of the people and to remove sickness from them by setting down for them prescriptions to which there is common assent (*mushtarakat al-taṣdīq*) about the obligation of practicing the things that preserve their health and remove their sickness, as well as of avoiding the contrary things. He is not able to make them all become physicians, because the physician is the one who knows by demonstrative methods (*bi'l-ṭuruq al-burhāniyya*) the things that preserve health and remove sickness. Then this one [the allegorical exegete] goes out to the people and says to them: 'These methods this physician has set down for you… have interpretations.' Yet they do not understand [these interpretations] and thus come to no assent as to what to do because of them.[18]

To the 'health' in the parable corresponds the perfection to which the prophet and lawgiver intends to lead all human beings insofar as they can attain it. To the 'prescriptions' corresponds the divine Law. What Averroes means is that if the beliefs based on the literal sense of the divine Law are taken away from non-philosophers, they risk falling into nihilism given that they lack the required intellectual abilities for understanding the allegorical sense. As a consequence they will not follow the guidance of the lawgiver on account of the literal sense, because the literal sense has lost its authority for them, nor will they follow it on account of the allegorical sense, which they do not understand. They lose, for instance, their belief in God as a king who enjoins virtue and prohibits vice. At the same time, they are unable to understand the notion of a first cause and how it relates to a virtuous life. Hence they lose both their belief in God and their belief in the value of a virtuous life. Again and again, Averroes stresses that the allegorical sense of the divine Law is not to be made public. His sharp criticism of Muslim theologians who 'strayed and led astray' is motivated above all by the fact that they 'revealed their allegorical interpretation

[17] For this argument, see in particular ibid., pp. 8, 19, 24–25; cf. Averroes, *Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla*, ed. Maḥmūd Qāsim (Cairo: Maktabat al-anjlū al-miṣriyya, 1964), pp. 132–135; English trans. Ibrahim Najjar, in *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes' Exposition of Religious Arguments* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), pp. 16–19.

[18] Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 27–28; for the metaphor of the physician, see also Averroes, *Kashf*, Ar., p. 181; Eng., p. 67.

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to the multitude' (*ṣaraḥū bi-ta'wīlihim li'l-jumhūr*), i.e., did not respect the divisions due to the 'difference in human nature'.[19] The theologian must never go beyond the literal sense when he addresses non-philosophers. Like philosophy, the allegorical sense of scripture must remain concealed. Philosophical doctrines, Averroes argues, may only be recorded in books that employ scientific demonstrations. For these, according to Averroes, are protected by their difficulty: books which 'use demonstrations are accessible only to those who understand demonstrations.'[20] In contrast to Maimonides, then, Averroes did not consider the possibility that non-philosophers can be habituated to philosophical doctrines by means of legislation, even if they do not understand how these doctrines are demonstrated.

Duplex Veritas*? Reconsidering the Case of Elijah Delmedigo*

I turn now to Delmedigo's conception of the relationship between philosophy and religion. The first to draw attention to Averroes's *Faṣl al-maqāl* as a source of Delmedigo's *Behinat ha-dat* was Adolph Hübsch.[21] According to Hübsch, Delmedigo's treatise is essentially Averroes's treatise in a Jewish garb, a claim he tried to substantiate through a long list of supposed parallels between the two works. Responding to Hübsch's thesis, Julius Guttmann highlighted a number of substantive differences between Averroes and Delmedigo.[22] In particular, Guttmann stressed that Delmedigo, in contrast to the historical Averroes, was not committed to the 'identity of religious and scientific truth,' but had 'obviously' adopted the 'double truth' doctrine characteristic of Christian Averroists.[23] Guttmann failed, however, to adduce specific Christian sources for Delmedigo's alleged 'double truth' doctrine, finally suggesting that Delmedigo's version of that doctrine was a 'lame and inconsistent compromise' between Averroes's original position and the position of Christian Averroists.[24] Later scholars went back and forth between the interpretations proposed by Hübsch and Guttmann. Some, like Hübsch, argued that Delmedigo was an orthodox Averroist, without, however, offering a satisfactory explanation of the passages in Delmedigo's works that Guttmann had presented as evidence for

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[19] See Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 29–32. According to *Kashf* (Ar., pp. 132–133; Eng., pp. 16–17), one of the main accomplishments of the *Faṣl al-maqāl* is to have shown that allegorical interpretation is strictly reserved to philosophers.

[20] Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, p. 21.

[21] Adolph Hübsch, 'Elia Delmedigos Bechinat ha-Dath und Ibn Roshd's Facl al-maqal', *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 31 (1882), pp. 552–563; 32 (1883), pp. 28–48.

[22] Julius Guttmann, 'Elias del Medigos Verhältnis zu Averroes in seinem Bechinat ha-Dat', in *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams*, ed. Alexander Kohut (New York: Press of the Jewish Institute of Religion, 1927), pp. 192–208.

[23] Ibid., pp. 197–198.

[24] Ibid., pp. 199–200.

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Delmedigo's disagreement with Averroes.[25] Others followed Guttmann in arguing that Delmedigo had adopted the 'double truth' doctrine of Christian Averroists, but were unable to explain how Delmedigo's version is related to the version of the doctrine contained in his alleged sources.[26] One problem of the scholarly discussion is its exclusive focus on Delmedigo's Averroism. I will argue, by contrast, that a crucial piece of the puzzle concerning his stance on the relationship between philosophy and religion is to be found in Maimonides. This is hardly surprising. Throughout *Behinat ha-dat* Delmedigo refers to Maimonides (the only author he mentions by name) with great respect: as 'the excellent man' (*ha-'ish ha-me'uleh*) or the man 'of great excellence and value' (*gadol ha-ma'alah ve-ha-'erekh*).[27] Although, as we will see, he disagrees with Maimonides on one important point, he clearly sees himself as partaking in the Maimonidean project.

I will not discuss the question of whether the 'double truth' doctrine has, in fact, ever been held by a philosopher or whether it is just a scholarly construct. What Guttmann meant by 'double truth' is the existence of contradictions between propositions established in philosophy and propositions established in theology. In such a case theology overrules philosophy, i.e., the philosophical proposition is taken to be false and the theological proposition to be true. Whether Christian Averroists made such assertions in good faith or on the basis of political considerations remains subject to scholarly dispute. For my purpose, the crucial question is whether Delmedigo held this view, i.e., allowed for genuine contradictions between propositions of the Law of Moses and propositions demonstrated in philosophy. Let me begin by examining a passage in which Delmedigo explains the purpose of the Law of Moses:

> And we say that adherents of religion who are correct in their views do not doubt that the purpose of the Law of Moses is to guide us in human affairs and in good deeds, as well as in true opinions insofar as this is possible for the entire people, and according to the nature of the select few (*ha-yehidim*) with respect to what is their exclusive domain. Hence the Law of Moses and the prophets set down certain fundamental principles by way of tradition and by way of rhetorical and dialectical explanations in accordance with the method of assent (*mishpat ha-'immut*) that is characteristic of the multitude, and it [the Law of Moses] stirred the select few to investigate according to the method of assent characteristic of them concerning these issues [i.e., the demonstrative method] … And the following becomes clear …: that the Law of Moses aims at the perfection of every adherent of religion insofar as possible to him. And since demonstrative science is impossible for the multitude as a whole, while it is possible for the select few – for this reason the Law of Moses requires both these things [i.e., assent on the basis of rhetorical and dialectical arguments and assent on the basis of demonstrative arguments].[28]

Delmedigo stresses from the outset that methods vary significantly from one discipline to another. The same Biblical text, for example, will be studied in different ways by a Talmudist, whose goal is to arrive at a legal decision, by a grammarian,

[25] See Ivry, 'Remnants' and in particular Aryeh L. Motzkin, 'Elija del Medigo, Averroes and Averroism', *Italia*, 6 (1987), pp. 7–20.

[26] See Geffen, *Life and Thought of Elijah Del Medigo,* and Ross, 'Introduction'.

[27] Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, pp. 84, 86, 92, 96.

[28] Ibid., p. 76; cf. p. 98 on the goal of the Law of Moses.

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whose goal is to provide evidence for a grammatical rule, and by an exegete, whose goal is to clarify the text's meaning.[29] The inference Delmedigo wants the reader to draw is clear: a prophet, whose goal is *political* – maximizing the perfection of the religious community –, will speak differently about things like God, angels, and providence than a philosopher whose goal is *scientific* – establishing what is true and what is false.[30] While the prophet's methods are dialectical, rhetorical and poetical, the philosopher uses scientific demonstrations. These goal-dependent differences in method can, but need not, lead to contradictions.[31] There is, for instance, no contradiction between prophetic and philosophical statements concerning God's existence and unity.[32] For the prophet, however, the scope of true opinions which he can communicate and the quality of the proofs on which he can ground them are constrained by his overall goal: to promote practical and theoretical perfection in a community made up of philosophers and non-philosophers. If the goal-dependent differences in method give rise to contradictions, Delmedigo argues, one way of resolving them is through allegorical exegesis. There are cases in which 'a thing has an interpretation reserved to the select few.'[33] One such case are angels: for philosophers they are entities 'assumed to be separate from any body and corporeal attribute.' In other words: they are the incorporeal intelligences of the supralunary world as conceived by medieval Aristotelians. In the Bible, by contrast, angels are described as entities 'apprehended through sense-perception as we apprehend bodies.'[34] This, of course, is a concession to non-philosophers, who are not familiar with the physical and metaphysical proofs for the existence and the attributes of incorporeal intelligences. If the prophet concludes that in order to attain his overall goal it is necessary to convey a notion of angels to non-philosophers, he must present them within a conceptual framework that his audience can understand. Like Averroes, Delmedigo harshly criticises the disclosing of such allegorical interpretations in public:

> Many of those who philosophise among the people of our nation have in my opinion strayed from the method of the Torah and its intention. And this is because they sought to change all the literal meanings of the verses (*peshate ha-pesuqim*) which are [found] in most of the branches and stories of the Torah, as if they wished to make the words of the Torah more beautiful and to ground them on the meanings [inferred by] scientific syllogism (*ha-heqqesh ha-sikhly*). And they did not succeed in either this or that … and I think that this should not be done at all … My method, therefore, is very different from the method of many who

[29] Ibid., p. 75.

[30] On the difference between the Mosaic Law and philosophy with respect to method, see in particular pp. 92–94.

[31] Strictly speaking, these are different methods belonging to the same discipline, i.e., logic. On the inclusion of *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* into Aristotle's *Organon* and its philosophical implications, see Deborah Black, *Logic and Aristotle's* Rhetoric *and* Poetics *in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990). Delmedigo briefly refers to the different methods of 'logic' (*ha-limmud ha-kolel*) at p. 75.

[32] See Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, pp. 76–78.

[33] Ibid., p. 77.

[34] Ibid., p. 93.

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> philosophise in our nation. They changed the goal both of the Torah and of philosophy and mixed the two [kinds] of investigation – the theological and the speculative (*ha-torani ve-ha-ʻiyyuni*) – together, as well as the universal and the particular method (*ha-derekh ha-kolel ve-ha-miyyuhad*). And they are like intermediaries between the theologians (*ha-medabberim*) among the religious people and the philosophers.[35]

Delmedigo explicitly mentions Maimonides as someone who 'walked on the way' he has criticised, although he takes care to stress what he surmises were Maimonides's noble motives.[36] As we saw above, Delmedigo attaches great importance to what in his view are the distinct goals of prophecy and philosophy and the distinct methods used to attain them. While the method of the philosopher is 'universal' – establishing what is true and false on the basis of scientific demonstrations which are valid always and everywhere – the method of the prophet is 'particular' – promoting practical and theoretical perfection in a religious community shaped by a particular set of geographic and cultural conditions. If the prophet judges that circumstances require presenting angels to non-philosophers in corporeal terms, his purpose would be undermined by a philosopher who publicly disclosed that the prophet's account, correctly understood, refers to incorporeal intelligences. The philosopher would be disregarding the political considerations that led to the allegorical representation in the first place.[37] As Averroes does with the analogy between the lawgiver and the doctor, Delmedigo stresses the danger inherent in disclosing the allegorical content of the Law of Moses to non-philosophers:

> When we tell these deep things (*ʼeleh ha-ʻamuqot*) as they truly are to the multitude, we do not benefit them, for they do not understand them, but we cause them great damage.[38]

It would, therefore, be a mistake to publicly interpret Biblical verses that conflict with demonstrated philosophical doctrines. This does not, however, mean that contradictions cannot *in principle* be resolved through allegorical interpretation. At no point does Delmedigo question the truth of the Mosaic Law.

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[35] Ibid., pp. 93–94.

[36] Ibid., p. 84. Indeed, Delmedigo's reverence for Maimonides is such that he makes an exception with respect to the public interpretation of God's anthropomorphic attributes. Whereas Averroes strictly opposed disclosing God's incorporeality in public, Delmedigo recognises it as a fundamental principle of the Law of Moses, newly introduced by Maimonides (see p. 86). He even goes so far as to turn the precedent into a general rule: Doctrines previously concealed may be disclosed if the opinions commonly held by non-philosophers permit it (see p. 93). On the concept of gradually disclosing the Mosaic Law's allegorical content in the Maimonidean tradition, see Fraenkel, 'Legislating Truth'. But Delmedigo is clearly uncomfortable with this aspect of Maimonides's project. It runs against the general thrust of his argument, which is even more insistent than Averroes's on the need to keep philosophy and religion apart.

[37] According to Delmedigo, the disclosure of the allegorical interpretation of angels led to conflict and strife between philosophers and kabbalists in the Jewish community (see *Behinat ha-dat*, pp. 93–94). His account of the conflict is clearly modelled on Averroes's description of the emergence of factions in Islam as a consequence of the disclosure of allegorical interpretations; see *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 29–32.

[38] Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 96. Note that this passage comes in the context of Delmedigo's discussion of rabbinic *aggadot*.

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Until now I have portrayed Delmedigo as an orthodox Averroist. His position is, however, more complicated. As we shall see, a closer examination will also solve the riddle of the passages which seem to support the thesis that he adopted a 'double truth' doctrine.

Following a tradition going back to Maimonides, Delmedigo provides a list of 'fundamental principles' (*shorashim*) of the Law of Moses.[39] The criterion to identify these principles in the Bible and in rabbinic literature is their 'necessity (*hekhrah*) for this divine religion.'[40] The fundamental principles can be subdivided into three classes according to their relation to philosophical doctrines. Firstly, there are principles like God's existence and God's unity, which coincide with doctrines demonstrated in philosophy. They are thus the same for philosophers and non-philosophers, only that the former, in addition to believing in them on account of the authority of the Law of Moses, also assent to them on account of scientific demonstrations. Secondly, there are principles which 'appear' (*yira'u*) to contradict philosophical doctrines. Both philosophers and non-philosophers assent to these principles, but the philosophers interpret them according to 'an interpretation reserved to the select few' and thus resolve the apparent contradiction.[41] Delmedigo gives no example of this second class of principles, but it is plausible to assume that they must be treated in the same way as the angels discussed above, whose existence is affirmed by philosophers and non-philosophers, but who are understood to be incorporeal by the former and corporeal by the latter. The third class of principles is the one which gave rise to the suggestion made by Guttmann and others that Delmedigo endorsed some version of the 'double truth' doctrine. Here is the relevant passage:

> We should not seek to verify things with respect to which a clear conflict (*mahloqqet mevu'eret*) exists between the Torah and philosophy – *if there is such a thing* – by means of a syllogistic investigation, but we ought to rely on the words of the Law and the opinion concerning the Law's meaning which is generally admitted among the adherents of religion. The reason for this is that a syllogistic dispute (*mahloqqet heqeshi*) gives rise, as it were, to doubt at the beginning of the investigation. But we, the adherents of the Torah, should at no time entertain any doubt whatsoever with respect to fundamental principles. Hence we should not engage in a syllogistic dispute with respect to the principles in question.[42]

The first thing to note is that the qualification ('if there is such a thing') shows that Delmedigo at least thought it possible that no 'clear conflict' exists between the Law of Moses and philosophy. In this case all conflicts would fall into the class of apparent conflicts which can be resolved through allegorical exegesis. If there is a clear conflict, however, the position of the Law of Moses must be accepted according to the meaning 'generally admitted among the adherents of religion,' i.e., not according

[39] See Menachem Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Delmedigo is briefly discussed in chapter 9.

[40] See Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 85.

[41] Ibid., p. 77.

[42] Ibid., p. 77 (my emphasis).

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to 'an interpretation reserved to the select few' as in the case of apparent conflicts. This acceptance should, moreover, rely on the authority of tradition alone, not on a 'syllogistic investigation' which tries to scientifically prove the position of the Law of Moses. The reason given is that a syllogistic dispute between the two positions gives rise to doubts about the validity of the principle in question, since its validity is considered to be in need of defence and hence is no longer taken for granted. But such doubts should at no time be entertained by 'the adherents of the Torah'. In a later passage Delmedigo adduces additional reasons for refraining from syllogistic disputes in case of clear conflicts:

> If we want to clarify [these contradictions] by means of the syllogistic method, and dispute with our opponent on the basis of this method, this will lead to many damages: firstly, we will strive to clarify by means of the syllogistic investigation, I mean the demonstrative and intellectual investigation, something which can only be verified by the method of the Torah. Secondly, when we are unable to clarify these things by means of a syllogistic investigation, this will lead us to deny the Torah or to reveal meanings of it that do not conform to religion, or we will reject the syllogistic methods altogether and thus destroy our intellect and its activities.[43]

The first point suggests that principles on which a clear conflict between the Law of Moses and philosophy exists can *in principle* not be settled by means of the syllogistic method. There is no conclusive proof for either of the conflicting positions. In the same context Delmedigo says that the disputed issues are exposed to 'doubt', that 'also the wise disagree on them,' and that the position advocated by the philosophers is never 'irrefutable'.[44] He stresses, moreover, that his admission that clear conflicts between the Law of Moses and philosophy are possible cannot be used for Christian apologetics: to justify doctrines like the trinity or the incarnation, which require accepting propositions that either entail a logical contradiction or contradict sense-data. Even if these doctrines were true, Delmedigo argues, God could not punish us for rejecting them. Since God endowed us with reason, it is impossible for us to believe in such doctrines, and we cannot be punished for not doing what is impossible for us to do.[45] But if God cannot demand that we accept evidently false doctrines, he also cannot demand that we reject evidently true ones. Hence a philosophical proposition cannot be evidently true if it is at odds with a fundamental principle of the Law of Moses.

Attributing a doctrine of 'double truth' to Delmedigo, then, misrepresents his position. The case he considers is a conflict between two improvable propositions. The philosopher, whose goal is to establish the truth, follows the methods of science and endorses the position that is *most likely* in light of the available evidence, which in this case contradicts a fundamental principle of the Law of Moses. Delmedigo's claim, however, that only the method of the Law of Moses can resolve the conflict in question does not imply that its adherents must accept a less likely position on the

[43] Ibid., p. 78.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., pp. 81–82.

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authority of super-rational revelation. The most plausible model for Delmedigo's notion of 'clear conflict' is Maimonides's account of the conflict between the Law of Moses and Arabic Aristotelians on the question whether the world is created or eternal. For Maimonides this conflict cannot be resolved conclusively on scientific grounds. Although he considers it possible to interpret the Law of Moses allegorically in light of the position of the philosophers, this would lead, he argues, to the subversion of the Law's fundamental purpose.[46] The conflict is thus set up in a way that corresponds precisely to Delmedigo's 'clear conflict'. In contrast to Delmedigo, however, Maimonides attempts to resolve the conflict by means of the syllogistic method. He argues that according to Aristotle too, neither position can be conclusively proven, but that Aristotle considered the eternity thesis more likely on account of the insufficient scientific data available in his time. Later Aristotelians went beyond Aristotle by taking the evidence he presented to be conclusive proof for the eternity thesis. Maimonides's re-examination of the problem leads him to conclude that the creation thesis is not only possible, but, in fact, more likely in light of new scientific discoveries which have been made since Aristotle's time. The position of the Law of Moses is, therefore, not only intelligible in light of political considerations; it also has greater plausibility from a scientific point of view.[47] Delmedigo would certainly agree with Maimonides that in the case of clear conflicts the position of the Law of Moses is more likely than the position advocated by the philosophers. Why, then, does he oppose settling such conflicts in the way proposed by Maimonides? Delmedigo's reply, I think, would be as follows: On Maimonides's account, a Jewish scientist in Aristotle's time, even if he had carefully examined all available scientific data, would have agreed with Aristotle that the eternity thesis is more plausible than the creation thesis. For this is how Maimonides construes the case: Instead of blaming Aristotle for wrongly assessing the evidence relating to the disputed question, he holds the historical state of knowledge responsible for it. Given the evidence available in Aristotle's time, his choice of the eternity thesis over the creation thesis was scientifically sound. For a Jewish scientist in Aristotle's place this would have had disastrous consequences: He would have been forced to choose one of the three options that for Delmedigo follow from the failure to solve the conflict by means of a syllogistic investigation: rejecting the position of the Law of Moses, reinterpreting it in light of the thesis advocated by the philosophers, or rejecting the syllogistic methods altogether as incompatible with his religious commitments. Since in the case of clear conflicts there is no conclusive proof for either position, the only way to resolve the conflict *scientifically* is to determine each position's degree of probability. But if Maimonides is right that probability assessments can change in light of scientific progress, they cannot be relied on for securing the fundamental principles of religion. At times the available evidence may support the

[46] See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (II, 25), II, p. 328.

[47] See Ibid., *Guide of the Perplexed* (II, 13–25), II, pp. 281–330. For the concept of scientific progress, see in particular ibid. (II, 19), II, pp. 302–312 and (II, 24), II, pp. 322–327. For considerations of probability, see ibid. (II, 23), pp. 321–322.

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position of the Law of Moses; at times it may support the position of the philosophers. Attempting to settle the dispute through a syllogistic investigation thus risks causing fatal damage to either the religious or the philosophical project. On this picture, Delmedigo's recommendation to keep the two projects apart has nothing to do with a 'double truth' doctrine. It simply means that a Jewish scientist, like every scientist, should resolve scientific disputes involving propositions that cannot be conclusively proven in light of the best evidence available in his time. If this leads him to a position at odds with the Law of Moses, he can rest assured that he is mistaken, while knowing that his inference is scientifically sound. He will leave it to scientific progress in the future to provide the evidence that will tip the scale in favour of the Law of Moses. This is how I understand Delmedigo's explanation of how he himself proceeded:

> Therefore I did not choose in my treatises devoted to scientific investigation (*ha-limmud ha-sikhly*) to dispute with the philosophers on issues on which they disagree with us by means of the philosophical method; for scientific investigation cannot [resolve such disputes]. Instead I relied on prophecy and the true tradition. And I think that earlier members of our religious community who wished to clarify these things through scientific investigation changed the methods of investigation which are unique for each object of study. They became like intermediaries between those who adhere to the Mosaic Law and those who do not and thus are neither adherents of the Mosaic Law nor philosophers.[48]

Elsewhere, Delmedigo explicitly admits to having adopted philosophical positions that are in conflict with the Law:

> If something will be said that is contrary to the Law (*contrarium legi*), this is not surprising, for I want to speak of the ideas of the philosophers according to their principles. But it is known that the method of the Law (*via legis*) in which greater trust must be placed (*cui magis creditur*), differs from the philosophical method (*via philosophica*).[49]

Clear conflicts between fundamental principles and scientific propositions indicate a problem that cannot be resolved given the state of scientific knowledge at the time, although it may well be resolved in the future. Trying to solve this problem is futile, for the project of science unfolds according to its own logic and methods and cannot be driven by considerations external to it. On the assumption that the Law of Moses is true, however, the Jewish scientist will always remain convinced that once all evidence becomes available, the position of the Law of Moses will be vindicated. Philosophical and religious commitments thus can be at variance *temporarily* on account of the contingent state of scientific knowledge. *Absolutely* speaking, however, Delmedigo agrees with Averroes that 'the truth does not contradict the truth.' It should now also be clear why, according to Delmedigo, a fundamental principle that is in conflict with a philosophical proposition 'can only be verified by the

[48] Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 83.

[49] Elijah Delmedigo, *Annotationes, De primo motore quaestio, De efficientia mundi*, in John of Jandun, *Quaestiones in libros Physicorum Aristotelis* (Venice: Hieronymus de Sanctis, and Johannes Lucilius Santritter, for Petrus Benzon and Petrus Plasiis, 1488), 122[a]–134[b] (133[a]). See Josep Puig Montada, 'On the Chronology of Elia del Medigo's Physical Writings', in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, eds Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1999), II, pp. 54–56.

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method of the Torah.' For, if it cannot be established on scientific grounds, it must be inferred as a necessary condition of the Law of Moses, which in turn can be explained in terms of the goal aimed at by the prophetic lawgiver. Within this political framework the principle thus becomes explicable. There is, then, no need to attribute to Delmedigo any form of 'double truth' doctrine which allows for genuine contradictions between philosophy and religion and which takes reason to be overruled by the authority of a super-rational revelation.

Let me adduce additional evidence that Delmedigo had Maimonides in mind when he introduced the notion of 'clear conflicts' between the Law of Moses and philosophy. The three examples given for possible conflicts of this kind are 'the existence of prophecy, the existence of reward and punishment … and the possibility of miracles with respect to God's essence.'[50] Hübsch suggested that on this point Delmedigo was following Averroes, who mentions 'God's existence … prophets, and happiness and misery in the hereafter' as examples of the 'principles of the Law' (*mabādi' al-sharī'a*).[51] The two sets of examples, however, not only fail to match, since Delmedigo includes miracles and excludes God's existence. But Averroes's examples are meant to illustrate the *exact opposite* of Delmedigo's, viz. that principles such as these are supported unanimously by religious and philosophical modes of demonstration. They would thus fall into Delmedigo's first category of fundamental principles (which, in fact, includes the principle of God's existence). Guttmann, in turn, suggested that Delmedigo deliberately departed from Averroes on this point on account of the 'double truth' doctrine.[52] In my view, Delmedigo was not primarily thinking of Averroes at all. For all three examples occur in the *Guide of the Perplexed* (II, 25), the dramatic culmination of Maimonides's account of the conflict between the Law of Moses and the philosophers on the issue of the created nature of the world. Asserting the world's eternity, Maimonides argues

> destroys the Law in its principle (*hādd al-sharī'a bi-aṣlihā*), necessarily gives the lie to every miracle, and reduces to inanity all the hopes and threats that the Law has held out, unless, by God, one interprets the miracles figuratively also … This, however, would result in some sort of crazy imaginings.[53]

Asserting creation, on the other hand, makes it possible to respond to questions such as this: 'Why did God give prophetic revelation to this one and not to that?'[54] Delmedigo clearly follows Maimonides closely, not only with respect to the examples he uses to illustrate possible conflicts between the Law of Moses and philosophy, but also in ruling out that such conflicts can be resolved through allegorical interpretation.

[50] Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 77.

[51] See Hübsch, 'Elia Delmedigos Bechinat ha-Dath und Ibn Roshd's Facl al-maqal', pp. 30–34, referring to *Faṣl al-maqāl*, p. 18.

[52] Guttmann, 'Elias del Medigos Verhältnis zu Averroes', pp. 206–207.

[53] Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (II, 25), II, p. 328; *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, p. 229.

[54] Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (II, 25), II, p. 329; *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn*, p. 230.

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One could ask, of course, why Delmedigo uses Maimonides's discussion of the world's creation as a model for his account of 'clear conflicts', but does not mention the very issue of creation as one of his examples. One obvious reason is that Delmedigo simply does not include the world's creation in his list of fundamental principles.[55] Moreover, several of Delmedigo's philosophical treatises – *De primo motore*, *De efficientia mundi* and the *Annotationes* to Averroes's commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*– suggest that he thought it possible to reconcile the world's creation and eternity though the concept of *creatio aeterna*.[56] If the world's creation were a fundamental principle, therefore, it would likely be in the second category, i.e., the category of principles which are understood differently by philosophers and non-philosophers.

This brings me to a further question: Did Delmedigo consider any of the fundamental principles of the Law of Moses to be truly at odds with philosophy? As I pointed out above, at very least Delmedigo thought it possible that the Law of Moses and philosophy were in complete agreement, for he introduces the concept of 'clear conflicts' with the qualification 'if there is such a thing.' With respect to miracles, he explicitly says in a later passage that their acceptance can be based on both a literal and an allegorical understanding. This implies that 'miracles' fall into the second category of fundamental principles. To complicate things further: miracles do not actually figure among the fundamental principles on Delmedigo's list. As for prophecy and reward and punishment, Delmedigo must have been aware of the standard philosophical interpretations of these concepts in the medieval Muslim and Jewish rationalist tradition. These principles, too, would, therefore likely be placed in the second category. This ambiguity about the question of whether any fundamental principles of the Law of Moses are truly in conflict with the Averroism Delmedigo endorsed as a philosopher, reflects the great caution with which he thought the issue should be treated. The political purpose of the Law of Moses must never be undermined through allegorical interpretation. 'We are perplexed,' Delmedigo writes,

> about the difficulty to decide … which of these issues should be interpreted allegorically and which should not … And we say that the man who truly knows the fundamental principles of the Torah and its purpose, knows which of the issues contained in the Torah are fit to be interpreted and which are not … And those who stand out in the religious community (*he-hashuvim me-anshey ha-dat*) ought to reflect deeply about these issues and be on their guard when it comes to their own reasoning (*ve-lahshod sikhlam*).[57]

This is followed by the passage, quoted above, in which Delmedigo stresses the difference between his own method and 'the method of many who philosophise in our nation.' Whereas the latter 'mixed the two [kinds] of investigation – the theological

[55] See Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, pp. 85–87. The question of why he does not consider creation a fundamental principle is, of course, interesting, but cannot be discussed here.

[56] For a discussion of these treatises, see Josep Puig Montada, 'Elia del Medigo and his Physical *Quaestiones*', in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelater?*, eds Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1998), pp. 929–936.

[57] *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 93.

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and the speculative,' Delmedigo emphasises the importance of keeping them apart. The great caution that Delmedigo urges for when it comes to dealing with possible conflicts between philosophy and the Law of Moses also helps to explain an additional point on which he departs from the orthodox Averroist position. In *Faṣl al-maqāl*, Averroes not only assumes that every contradiction between the divine Law and philosophy can *in principle* be resolved through allegorical interpretation; he also rules that the philosopher is *obliged* to resolve contradictions in this manner.[58] One may ask what benefit is derived from engaging in such an exegetical exercise, given Averroes's strict prohibition on disclosing allegorical interpretations. Why is it not sufficient if the philosopher is in principle committed to the agreement between the divine Law and philosophy? While Delmedigo *allows* for resolving contradictions through the use of allegories as long as they are not of the 'clear conflicts' type, he is clearly not enthusiastic about doing so. Upon reflection such interpretations seem useless, quite apart from the danger they pose if disclosed in public under inappropriate circumstances. The best way to study the propositions of the Law of Moses is in light of the Law's own peculiar method and purpose. The aim, then, would be to understand how these propositions are necessary for or contribute to maximizing the perfection of the religious community. Instead of working out, for example, how the anthropomorphic representation of angels allegorically refers to incorporeal intelligences, the question would be which political considerations motivated Moses to represent angels anthropomorphically in the first place. Seeking the allegorical content of the Law of Moses would mean studying it with the goal of establishing the truth. But this is the goal of philosophy. It would be just as pointless as making dialectical, rhetorical, or poetical arguments in a philosophical treatise in order to communicate its content to non-philosophers. This is not the goal of philosophy, but of prophecy. Concerning miracles, for example, Delmedigo explicitly questions the purpose of changing the literal meaning of the Law of Moses, since, as we saw above, both philosophers and non-philosophers accept them, even though they understand them in different ways.[59] It is thus not surprising that he implicitly casts doubt on the philosopher's obligation to provide allegorical explanations. Also outside the domain of 'clear conflicts', the philosopher should only 'perhaps' (*'ulay*) interpret passages in the Law of Moses which, taken literally, contradict doctrines demonstrated in philosophy.[60] Delmedigo thus puts even more stress than Averroes on the methodological autonomy of philosophical and prophetic discourse. He remains committed to the core assumption of the medieval Islamic and Jewish rationalist tradition concerning the fundamental unity of the truth. For this assumption grounds the authority of the Law of Moses for a philosopher who does not recognise a super-rational source of validation. But he sees no point in working out this unity in practice by trying to prove religious principles scientifically or by interpreting the Bible allegorically, whether in public or in private. Given the distinct methods and goals of philosophy and prophecy, no benefit would derive from

[58] See Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, pp. 9–10 and 19–20.

[59] See Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 93.

[60] Ibid.

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such an undertaking. On the contrary, it could easily cause harm given the uncertainty of what may and may not be interpreted allegorically without damaging the purpose of the Law of Moses.

The Portrait of Spinoza as an Averroist

Let me start by outlining the broader question that motivates my interest in Spinoza's relationship to the Averroistic tradition.[61] In his critique of religion in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Spinoza develops an exegetical method by which he intends to show that scripture contains no truth and, therefore, cannot interfere with philosophy.[62] Whereas philosophy determines what is true and false, religion based on scripture secures obedience to the law.[63] On the other hand, there are a significant number of passages throughout Spinoza's work – from the *Cogitata metaphysica* to the *Ethics* and the late correspondence with Henry Oldenburg – in which he attributes a true core to scripture, often presented as its allegorical content. My main thesis is that this inconsistency is best explained by assuming that Spinoza is committed to two projects that he was ultimately unable to reconcile: he wants to use religion as a replacement for philosophy, one that provides the basis for the best life accessible to non-philosophers, and he wants to refute religion's claim to truth in order to defend what he calls 'the freedom to philosophise'.

The concept of religion as a replacement for philosophy is precisely the concept adopted by medieval Muslim and Jewish philosophers. Spinoza, who knew this concept well through his study of medieval Jewish philosophy, calls it 'dogmatic', describing and rejecting it in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.[64] The example he uses to illustrate this dogmatic interpretation of religion is Maimonides. His main criticism is that the dogmatist, instead of strictly separating philosophy from theology, turns theology into the 'handmaid of philosophy' (*ancilla philosophiae*).[65]

I have shown in detail elsewhere that, before Spinoza started working on the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in 1665, he consistently endorsed the dogmatic position

[61] For a comprehensive account of my thesis concerning Spinoza's conception of the relationship between philosophy and religion, see Carlos Fraenkel, 'Could Spinoza Have Presented the Ethics as the True Content of the Bible?', in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, IV, eds Daniel Garber and Steven Nadler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), pp. 1–50.

[62] See in particular Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, ed. Fokke Akkerman, with French trans. Jacqueline Lagrée and Pierre-François Moreau, in *Oeuvrescomplètes*, under the direction of P.-F. Moreau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999-), III, chapter 7. I quote the *Tractatus* from this edition. I add references to Carl Gebhardt's edition, *Opera*, 4 vols (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), according to which I also quote all other writings of Spinoza.

[63] See in particular *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, in *Oeuvres*, III, chapters 12–15.

[64] See Chaps. 7 and 15.

[65] Cf. the title of ch. 15: 'Nec theologiam rationi, nec rationem theologiae ancillari, ostenditur, et ratio, qua nobis S. Scripturae authoritatem persuademus'.

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whenever he discussed the character of scripture.[66] A passage from *Cogitata metaphysica* (II, 8), in which Spinoza discusses God's will, must suffice here to illustrate this early dogmatism. The problem at stake is this: How are we to understand passages in scripture according to which 'God hates some things and loves other things', since, taken literally, they imply that God's will is affected by and reacts to things he created and hence is mutable? This appears to contradict the view of the philosopher, according to whom God's will is immutable:

> But when we say that God hates certain things and loves certain things, this is said in the same way as scripture says that the earth will spit out human beings and other things of this kind. That God, however, is not angry at anyone, nor loves things as the multitude (*vulgus*) believes, can be sufficiently derived from scripture itself. For this is in Isaiah and more clearly in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter 9… Finally, if in the holy scriptures some other things occur, which induce doubt, this is not the place to explain them; since here we only inquire into the things which we can grasp in the most certain way through natural reason (*ratione naturali*); and it is sufficient that we demonstrate these clearly in order to know that scripture must also teach the same things (*ut sciamus Sacram paginam eadem etiam docere debere*); because the truth does not contradict the truth (*veritas veritati non repugnat*) and scripture cannot teach the absurdities (*nugae*) which the multitude imagines … Let us not think for a moment that anything could be found in sacred scripture that would contradict the natural light (*quod lumini naturae repugnet*).[67]

The conflict between the philosophical doctrine of God's will and scripture is resolved in the way most medieval Muslim and Jewish rationalists would resolve it: the statements about God's love and hate in scripture must be understood allegorically. Only non-philosophers understand them literally. Moreover, the correct understanding of God's love and hate can be found in scripture itself, in both the prophets of the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah) and in the New Testament (Paul). The criterion to determine which passages of scripture are to be understood literally and which allegorically is clearly their agreement or disagreement with the corresponding philosophical doctrine. Contradictions between philosophy and scripture derive from the fact that scripture does not teach things *more philosophico*, i.e., in the way we grasp them when we follow 'natural reason'. But since the truth arrived at by reason is the same as the truth contained in scripture, we can rest assured that nothing that is clearly demonstrated by reason contradicts what scripture teaches. The character of the teachings of scripture is adapted to the imagination of non-philosophers. Understood literally, they are false, but the philosopher-exegete should in principle be able to make the philosophical content visible within the non-philosophical form.

From other passages in Spinoza's early work we learn in which way the literal sense is useful to non-philosophers. In the first letter to Willem van Blyenbergh, written in January 1665, Spinoza argues, for example, using a Maimonidean formula, that the prophet must speak 'in the language of human beings' (*more humano*) in order to instruct non-philosophers. By speaking of God *more humano* and translating causal connections

[66] See Fraenkel, 'Could Spinoza?'.

[67] Spinoza, *Cogitata metaphysica*, in *Opera*, I, pp. 264–265.

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into laws associated with rewards and punishments, scripture is able to replace for the non-philosopher philosophical insight as a guide to virtuous action.[68] This I take to be Spinoza's main motivation for adopting the dogmatic position: It allows preserving the authority of scripture as the basis for traditional religion which provides a pedagogical-political programme for non-philosophers – Spinoza's *ancilla philosophiae*.

Up to about 1665, Spinoza's position on the relationship between philosophy and scripture shares the main features of the position he rejects as 'dogmatism' in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. The issue becomes more complicated after 1665, when he begins to work out his critique of religion, published in 1670 as part of the *Tractatus*.[69] But despite the critique of religion carried out in the *Tractatus*, different versions of the dogmatic position reappear throughout Spinoza's later writings, reflecting the position characteristic of medieval Muslim and Jewish philosophers.[70] What all the passages in question have in common is this: none of them can be justified through the exegetical method that Spinoza promises to adopt in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, namely 'to neither affirm anything of [scripture] nor to admit anything as its doctrine which I did not most clearly derive from it.'[71] To put it in a provocative way: If Spinoza had never written his critique of religion, these passages, together with those of his earliest writings, would have allowed him to claim that the allegorical content of scripture is never in conflict with what the *Ethics* teaches *more geometrico*, and that the literal content of scripture teaches *more humano*, i.e., by means of parables and laws the doctrines of the *Ethics*.

Moreover, the dogmatic position, which has philosophy determine the true core of religion, is not only compatible with the philosophical project in the *Ethics*, but also with the freedom to philosophise that Spinoza sets out to defend in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. It is clear that Spinoza's main opponent in the *Tractatus* is not the dogmatic position, but the position of the Calvinist Church in seventeenth-century Netherlands, in particular the view that the authority of scripture overrides the authority of reason. Spinoza describes this position as 'scepticism' in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* and contrasts it with the dogmatic position.[72] It is this form of 'scepticism' that turns philosophy into the 'handmaid of theology'. This in turn is the chief threat to the *libertas philosophandi* according to Spinoza.[73]

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[68] Spinoza, *Epistolae*, in *Opera*, IV, pp. 92–94.

[69] I take 1665 to be the turning point, because in his correspondence with Willem van Blyenbergh in January and February (letters 19, 21, 23, in *Opera*, IV, pp. 86–95; 126–133; 144–152), Spinoza still firmly upholds the dogmatic position, whereas from his correspondence with Oldenburg in the Autumn of the same year we learn that he had started to work on the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. See letters 29 and 30, in *Opera*, IV, pp. 164–166.

[70] For a discussion of these passages, see Fraenkel, 'Could Spinoza?'.

[71] Spinoza, 'Praefatio' to *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, in *Oeuvres*, III. Spinoza elaborates on the method in *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (ch. 7), in *Opera*, III.

[72] See Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (ch. 15), in *Opera*, III.

[73] In the preface to the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Spinoza describes 'scepticism' as the 'one obstacle' that prevents potential philosophers from philosophizing (*Oeuvres*, III, p. 74; *Opera*, III, p. 12); cf. *Epistola* 30, in *Opera*, IV, p. 166.

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Let me now address three important objections to my thesis concerning Spinoza's early dogmatism.[74] The first objection is that I am wrong to claim that until 1665 Spinoza consistently endorsed the dogmatic position, for there are three passages in his early writings in which he clearly states that philosophy and theology contradict each other. These are the *scholium* to *Principia philosophiae Cartesianae* II, 13, *Cogitata metaphysica* II, 12, and *Epistola* 23 to Blyenbergh. In the last of these passages the alleged contradiction is most clearly formulated:

> Furthermore, I should like it here to be noted that while we are speaking philosophically (*Philosophice loquimur*), we ought not to use the language of theology. For since theology has usually, and with good reason, represented God as a perfect man, it is therefore appropriate that in theology it is said that God desires something, that God is affected by anger through the deeds of the impious and delights in those of the pious. But in philosophy, where we clearly perceive that to ascribe to God those attributes which make a man perfect would be as wrong as to ascribe to a man the attributes that make perfect an elephant or an ass, these and similar words have no place, and we cannot use them without utterly confusing our concepts. So, speaking philosophically, we cannot say that God wants something from somebody, or that something angers or delights him. For these are all human attributes, which have no place in God.[75]

The second objection is that Spinoza not only stresses the contradictions between philosophical and theological propositions, but also shows no interest in resolving them by allegorically commenting on scripture as Maimonides does in his chief philosophical-theological work, the *Guide of the Perplexed*.[76]

The third objection, finally, concerns my claim that the dogmatic position is consistent with the *libertas philosophandi* defended in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. This seems to be contradicted by the fact that Spinoza criticises Maimonides in the *Tractatus* for introducing a form of philosophical tyranny into scriptural exegesis. According to Spinoza, *libertas philosophandi* not only means that philosophers must be safe from persecution in the name of religion, but that all citizens have the right to believe whatever they think is right on the basis of scripture, regardless of whether or not this belief corresponds to what has been demonstrated in philosophy. If Maimonides's view were correct, Spinoza writes,

> it would follow that the multitude, which for the most part does not know demonstrations or has no leisure for them, could admit of scripture only that which is derived from the authority and testimony of philosophers (*de Scriptura nihil nisi ex sola authoritate et testimoniis philosophantum admittere poterit*), and would therefore have to assume that philosophers cannot err in their interpretations of scripture. This would indeed be a novel form of ecclesiastical authority, with very strange priests or pontiffs, more likely to excite the multitude's ridicule than veneration.[77]

[74] For a discussion of why Spinoza adopted the dogmatic position in his early writings, why he rejected it in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, and why he continued making use of it even after dismissing it, see again Fraenkel 'Could Spinoza?'.

[75] Spinoza, *Epistolae*, in *Opera*, IV, p. 98.

[76] See the programmatic passages in Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I, pp. 5–20; (II, 2), II, pp. 252–254.

[77] Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, in *Oeuvres*, III, p. 316; *Opera*, III, p. 114.

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All three objections can be met, I contend, once we recognise that Spinoza's dogmatism in important respects does not follow Maimonides, but the Averroistic tradition in the form it was taken up by Delmedigo. It is virtually certain that Spinoza did not read Averroes's *Faṣl al-maqāl*. For one thing it was not part of the Latin reception of Averroes. It is precisely because Averroes's philosophical-theological works were not known to the Latin West that he came to be represented as a philosophical heretic and denier of religion.[78] One only needs to read the article on Averroes in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* to see that this distorted view of Averroes remained alive in the early modern period.[79] What I will characterise as Spinoza's Averroism has nothing in common with this tradition. It is, moreover, highly unlikely that Spinoza read the medieval Hebrew translation of the *Faṣl al-maqāl*.[80] No reference to it is found in Spinoza, nor is there any evidence that this translation was known in Jewish intellectual circles in the seventeenth century.

We do know, on the other hand, that Spinoza owned a copy of Delmedigo's *Behinat ha-dat*. All Averroistic elements in Spinoza's position on the relationship between philosophy and religion can be explained on the assumption that he read Delmedigo's treatise. This assumption gains plausibility because other writings in the same volume containing Delmedigo's treatise left traces in Spinoza's work. It gains additional plausibility because the contradiction between philosophy and theology discussed in one of the three passages in Spinoza's early writings mentioned above corresponds precisely to the only example for such contradictions given by Delmedigo: the contradiction concerning the understanding of angels.[81] Finally, when it comes to the methodological autonomy of philosophical and prophetic discourse, Spinoza is clearly closer to Delmedigo than to Averroes.

In a paper published in 1922, Leon Roth documented the traces in Spinoza's work left by the volume containing Delmedigo's treatise. In the same paper he also drew attention to the importance of Delmedigo for understanding Spinoza.[82] Roth's suggestion has not been pursued further by Spinoza scholars. In my view he not only misunderstood Delmedigo, but also misrepresented his influence on Spinoza:

> It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out how closely this [i.e., Delmedigo's position] is reproduced in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. The professed aim of the *Tractatus* is to refute the view of Maimonides that philosophy and theology are identical, and the crucial chapter to which all the earlier chapters are preliminary [i.e., chapter 15] sums up the discussion in the very words of the *Examination of Religion* … The definite sundering of

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[78] Alfred Ivry, 'Averroes and the West: The First Encounter/Non-Encounter', in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture,* ed. Ruth Link-Salinger (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), pp. 142–158.

[79] See Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1st edn (1697); 4th edn (Amsterdam: Brunel, Wetstein & Smith, 1730), pp. 384–391.

[80] For the Hebrew translation, see Golb, 'The Hebrew Translation'.

[81] See Spinoza, *Cogitata metaphysica* (II, 12), in *Opera*, I, pp. 275–281, and Delmedigo, *Behinat ha-dat*, p. 93.

[82] Leon Roth, 'The *Abscondita Sapientiae* of Joseph del Medigo', *Chronicon Spinozanum*, 2 (1922), pp. 54–66.

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> the spheres of theology and philosophy to the establishment of which … the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* is specifically devoted, is one of the landmarks in the history of political freedom as well as of intellectual development … We now see that the very phraseology of its main thesis is to be found in the obscure Hebrew essay of R. Elijah.[83]

As we saw above, a close reading of *Behinat ha-dat* does not confirm Roth's thesis. If my argument holds, Delmedigo assumed, like Averroes, that religion and philosophy are fundamentally in agreement. But even if I am wrong and Delmedigo does allow for genuine contradictions between religion and philosophy, the former always overrides the latter. Both positions are incompatible with Spinoza's stance in the *Tractatus theologicus-politicus*.

Delmedigo provides, on the other hand, a key to understanding Spinoza's early dogmatism. On the assumption that my reconstruction of Delmedigo is correct, this version of Averroism is not exposed to the three objections which I outlined above. Firstly, the contradictions between theology and philosophy that Spinoza stresses in the third letter to Blyenbergh simply follow from the fact that the arguments of theology are based on the literal sense of scripture. This by no means implies that for Spinoza the allegorical sense of scripture does not agree with the doctrines demonstrated in philosophy. As we saw earlier, he expressly states their agreement, among other places in *Cogitata metaphysica* II, 8. Theology, according to Spinoza, 'with good reason represented God as a perfect man', who 'is affected by anger through the deeds of the impious and delights in those of the pious.' For theology's purpose is not to determine philosophically God's existence and essence, but to convey through dialectical, rhetorical and poetical means an idea of God to non-philosophers and to guide them to virtuous action. Also the second objection does not hold. It is clear now why an Averroist would not attempt to resolve contradictions between philosophy and theology by composing an allegorical commentary on problematic passages in scripture as Maimonides did. On this point both Averroes and Delmedigo disagree with Maimonides who, as I pointed out above, deviates from the standard position of medieval Muslim and Jewish philosophers, likely under the influence of Almohad theology. Delmedigo, moreover, explicitly criticises this aspect of Maimonideanism, which became a distinctive feature of Jewish philosophy after Maimonides. Finally, Averroists also would not implement an exegetical tyranny of philosophers. On the contrary, the philosopher must refrain from intervening in the beliefs of non-philosophers even if they are philosophically untenable. Averroes and Delmedigo recognise, of course, a set of fundamental religious principles to which all members of the religious community must subscribe. It includes, for example, God's existence and unity. But these exist in Spinoza's *religio catholica* as well. He clearly does not extend freedom of opinion and interpretation to the principles of the *religio catholica*.[84]

In the passage from *Cogitata metaphysica* II, 8 Spinoza only considers issues 'which we can grasp in the most certain way through natural reason' and which can be 'demonstrated clearly.' Concerning these issues, he argues, we know 'that scripture

[83] Ibid., p. 58.

[84] Cf. Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (ch. 14), in *Oeuvres*, III.

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must also teach the same things, because the truth does not contradict the truth.' He does not address the possibility of improvable propositions concerning which philosophy and religion may temporarily be at variance, as in the case of Delmedigo's third class of principles of the Law of Moses. But the omission of this somewhat peculiar consideration should not detract from the fundamental agreement between Spinoza's early dogmatism and Delmedigo's Averroism. With respect to the methodological autonomy of philosophical and prophetic discourse, Spinoza is clearly closer to Delmedigo than to Averroes. Averroes, as we saw, not only assumes that every contradiction between the divine Law and philosophy can in principle be resolved through allegorical interpretation, but also rules that the philosopher is obligated to resolve contradictions in this manner. Delmedigo casts doubt on the philosopher's obligation to provide allegorical explanations. The philosopher should 'perhaps' interpret passages in the Law of Moses which, taken literally, contradict doctrines demonstrated in philosophy. Spinoza, in turn, goes one step further than Delmedigo: he drops the obligation to provide allegorical interpretations altogether. Recall once again the passage from *Cogitata metaphysica* II, 8: 'here we only inquire into the things which we can grasp in the most certain way through natural reason; and it is sufficient that we demonstrate these clearly in order to know that scripture must also teach the same things.' Thus in order to ground the authority of scripture dogmatically, Spinoza considers it sufficient to assume that its allegorical content can in principle not contradict what is clearly demonstrated by natural reason. There is no need to actually seek the allegorical content. Finally, if the position advocated in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* can in a certain sense be understood as a further radicalization of the methodological autonomy of philosophy and religion assumed in the Averroistic tradition, in another sense, however, Spinoza breaks with the fundamental premise that underlies the dogmatism not only of al-Fārābī, Maimonides, Averroes and Delmedigo, but also of his own early writings, namely that 'the truth does not contradict the truth.'

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Chapter 12
Averroes and Arabic Philosophy in the Modern *Historia Philosophica*: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Gregorio Piaia

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The varied fortune of great thinkers is like the fate of shares on the stock market: their value goes up or down depending on their appreciation, and it is not rare to find cases in which a once celebrated and acclaimed philosopher ends up in the margins of the market of ideas, though his share price may rise again with a change in the intellectual climate and cultural fashion. The most emblematic case of this fluctuation is of course Aristotle, to whom we could apply the image that Alessandro Manzoni used for Napoleon in his ode *Il cinque maggio* (lines 47–48): 'due volte nella polvere, due volte sull'altar'.[1] And, of course, together with Aristotle, we should mention Averroes, who for centuries was considered the Aristotelian commentator *par excellence*. Dante deliberately placed him among the *spiriti magni* in the *nobil castello* of Limbo (*Inf.* IV, 144), at the end of his review of the ancient wise men who lived before or outside Christianity, but who because of their intellectual and moral stature deserved to be placed in Limbo rather than Hell itself, as was the case of Epicurus.

If Dante consecrated Averroes's fame as the Commentator on the 'maestro di color che sanno' – Aristotle, that is, 'the' philosopher – Averroes's fortune was well-consolidated in the fifteenth, sixteenth and the first decades of the seventeenth century thanks also to the numerous Venetian editions of the Aristotelian *corpus* translated into Latin together with Averroes's commentaries: from the 1483 incunable, printed *impendio industriaque Andreae Torresani*, to the *apud Junctas* editions of 1550–1552, 1562 and 1573–1575, and the Zaccaria Zenaro edition *apud Cominum de Tridino* (= Trino Monferrato) of 1560–1562. The famous Giunti edition in particular, which also included Averroes's own works (such as the *Sermo de substantia*

[1] Alessandro Manzoni, *Liriche e tragedie*, ed. Vladimiro Arangio Ruiz (Turin: UTET, 1968), p. 93.

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orbis, the *Destructio destructionis Philosophiae Algazelis* in the translation by Calo Calonymos, and the *De animae beatitudine, seu epistola de intellectu*),[2] could not fail to find a place in the libraries of European scholars. Nevertheless, if we look through the *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (1627) by Gabriel Naudé, one of the most famous erudite men of letters of the age, we find that of the long series of Aristotelian commentators only Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius are mentioned explicitly, while Averroes is evidently among those 'vieux Interpretes d'Aristote' whose works should be replaced by those of the most recent interpreters of Peripateticism, all of them professors of the University of Padua: Agostino Nifo (c.1473–1538/45), Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512), Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), Jacopo Zabarella (1532–1589), Francesco Piccolomini (1523–1607), Cesare Cremonini (1550–1631) and Fortunio Liceti (1577–1657).[3] Nor can it be said that Naudé neglected Arabic writers, given that in his library we find the works of Avicenna and Avenzoar (*Ibn Zuhr*) on medicine, those of Albohazen (Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Abī'l-Rijāl) on astronomy, Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham) on optics, and Albumasar (Abū Maʿshar) on the interpretation of dreams.[4]

Indeed Naudé himself showed that he was well aware of the figure of Averroes (placed significantly alongside Aristotle) in another of his famous works, the *Apologie pour les grands personnages soupçonnez de magie* (1625), regarding that demon, which – if we are to believe Girolamo Cardano – Averroes had among his followers. It is a statement which is unacceptable on a theoretical level, Naudé objects decidedly, since Averroes did not or could not believe in the existence of demons, just as Avicenna did not believe in the powers of the philosopher's stone, whatever the alchemists might say.[5] It is still significant that, when dealing with the

[2] We should bear in mind, however, that the letter *De animae beatitudine* is not a work by Averroes, but 'the culmination of a tradition whose final product was placed under the name of Averroes'. See Marc Geoffroy, 'À la recherche de la *béatitude*', in Averroès, *La béatitude de l'âme*, eds and trans. Marc Geoffroy and Carlos Steel (Paris: Vrin, 2001), pp. 9–81 (9); Carlos Steel, 'La tradition latine du traité', in ibid., pp. 83–129 (111–112, on the 'apud Junctas' editions).

[3] Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque*, 2 edn (Paris: Rolet le Duc, 1644), ch. 4, pp. 43 and 71.

[4] Ibid., p. 40.

[5] Gabriel Naudé, *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages qui ont esté faussement soupçonnez de magie* (The Hague: Adrien Vlac, 1653), pp. 320–321: 'Ceux qui pour ne faire Aristote inferieur à Socrate maintiennent aussi qu'il avoit l'assistance particuliere de quelque Demon, ne me semblent moins faire de violence à sa doctrine, que Cardan à celle d'Averroes, qui n'a jamais creu qu'il y eust des diables, quand il introduit un Demon qui se disoit l'un de ses disciples et sectateurs, ou que les Alchymistes font tous les jours à Avicenne, qui nie absolument dans Aegidius Romanus la possibilité de leur trasmutation metallique, quand ils luy attribuent la cognoissance et pratique de la pierre Philosophale: car il n'y a rien si certain dans la doctrine d'Aristote, et de si constant parmy tous ses Interpretes, qu'il n'a jamais admis d'autres intelligences que celles qu'il donnoit à un chacun des globes de la machine celeste pour lui causer son mouvement, rejettant toutes autres sortes de Demons et d'Anges pour demeurer ferme en ses principes, et n'admettre aucune chose qui ne luy fust cogneuë ou par le mouvement ou par l'operation.' There is another mention of Averroes on p. 354, regarding his praise of the works of al-Kindī.

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origin of philosophy in the introduction to his *Syntagma philosophicum*, which was published posthumously in 1658, Pierre Gassendi mentions Averroes (along with Lucretius) as an example of the followers who, through an excess of zeal, attributed the founder of their own sect with having initiated philosophy itself, neglecting or refusing to recognise the thinkers who came before, who were certainly not unknown: an 'exaggeration' that Gassendi considers deplorable, all the more so coming from the philosopher Averroes than from the poet Lucretius, since a philosopher must swear on the truth and not on a man.[6]

The close connection with Aristotle, therefore, guaranteed Averroes widespread and certain fame, but it proved to be a double-edged sword when scholars – like Gassendi – not only denounced the excesses committed by the Commentator, but radically criticised the very practice of the *commentarium*, and distance themselves from all the thinkers of the past, whether they be Plato or Aristotle, or Epicurus. This is the case of Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), who considered the work of the commentator to be 'peu digne d'un homme d'esprit.'[7] Here Averroes is given the role of representing an activity judged as perverse not only on an intellectual but also on a moral level, as the fruit of 'vanity' and 'self-love': these – to return to our original metaphor – then push up the value of a thinker's 'share' to the point of making him an excellent, even divine, man, in such a way that the commentator can then, unworthily, bask in his reflected fame. Hence, according to Malebranche, the falseness and the senselessness of most prefaces. As an example, he refers in turn to Averroes's preface to his Long Commentary on the *Physics*, quoting other passages (taken from the commentary on the *De generatione animalium* and the *Destructio destructionis*) from which his veneration of Aristotle and his doctrine transpires, defined as *summa veritas*.[8] Malebranche's judgement here is a total *destructio*, without the possibility of appeal:

> In truth, must not be mad to speak thus? And must not the prejudice of this author have degenerated into extravagance and folly? … Nevertheless, the works of this commentator have spread throughout Europe and even more distant countries. They have been translated

[6] Pierre Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, 6 vols (Lyon: Laurent Anisson and Jean-Baptiste Devenet, 1658; repr. Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964), I, p. 7a: 'ideo heic solum observandum, solere vulgo sectatores tanti illos ducere quorum Sectis nomina dant, ut ipsis primam Philosophiae originem acceptam ferant. Ac ne omneis recenseam, seligo dumtaxat ex Aristotelis Averroëm, qui ex Aristotelis Interpretibus Commentatoris nomen fecit suum; et ex Epicureis Lucretium, quem solum expositorem Philosophiae Epicuri habemus.' There follows the quotation of a long passage from Averroes's preface to the *Physics* (where Aristotle is presented as he who 'invented' and perfected physics, logic, and metaphysics), followed by the quotation of various passages from the *De rerum natura*, which exalt the discoveries of Epicurus. 'Et posset quidem forte Lucretius videri Averroë excusatior,' concludes Gassendi, 'quod ut Philosophum, sic Poëtam agat, quem exaggeratio magis deceat; verum quomodocumque tandem Philosophiam quis profiteatur, quoniam decet illum non in hominem, sed in veritatem iurare; idcirco non possunt huiusmodi omnes exaggerationes eum non dedecere' (p. 7b).

[7] Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, (II, II, 6), ed. Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. André Robinet, 20 vols (Paris: Vrin, 1958–1970), I, p. 295.

[8] See also Bertolacci's and Martin's contributions in this volume.

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> from Arabic into Hebrew, and from Hebrew into Latin, and perhaps even into many other languages, which sufficiently shows how the savants have esteeemed them. So one can hardly give a more obvious example than this of the prejudice of persons of learning. For it shows that not only do they often become prejudiced about some author, but their prejudice is also communicated to others in proportion to the esteem they have in the world. And so the false praises the commentators give to an author often cause persons of limited intelligence, devoted to reading him, to become preoccupied and fall into an infinity of errors.[9]

The crisis of Peripateticism and the establishment of the new philosophy and the new science are also reflected in the image of Averroes and, more generally, that of Arabic science. From this point of view, Francis Bacon has very clear ideas: if in the *Advancement of Learning* (1605) he lumps together in his criticism the great naturalists of the past (Pliny, Albertus Magnus and Cardano) and 'divers of the Arabians', in the *Novum organum* (1620) he believes it is useless to mention the Arabs and the Scholastics, since their contribution to the development of the sciences is judged to be negative.[10] This does not mean that another of the 'Fathers' of modern thought, Montesquieu, was not fully aware of the role of the Arabs, the Arabs of the Iberian Peninsula in particular, in the development of science in Europe, though he wonders with a touch of humour how it was that it was precisely the Arabs who remained outside this process.[11] On the other hand, Averroes's positive fame must have been persistent, in certain cultural circles at least, since, on 1st September, 1721, Anthony Epis, sent a letter from Bucharest to the great man of letters Jean Le Clerc in Amsterdam, to ask him to purchase and send as soon as possible a dozen works to Vienna, works of erudition above all, among which an Arabic-Latin edition of Averroes's *Opera omnia*. The recipient of this precious collection was no minor figure, but the Greek Nicholas Maurocordatos, Voivode (governor, that is, of the Sublime Port) of Moldavia and Wallachia, known for his works of erudition and 'très versé', as Epis himself specifies in a letter dated 8th November, 1720, 'dans les langues Arabe, Persienne, et Turque', as well as Ancient Greek, Latin, French, and Italian.[12]

Averroes's fortune (or lack of it) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot however be linked only to his close relationship with Aristotle. Besides the traditional figure of the Commentator, destined to crystallise into the negative cliché of the 'yoke of

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[9] Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, p. 298; *The Search after Truth*, eds and trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 148–149. Averroes's exaltation of Aristotle is also ironically mentioned in III, I, 3, § 2, pp. 399–400. But see also VI, II, 4: 'Descartes ne nous a pas été donné de Dieu pour nous apprendre tout ce qu'il est possible de sçavoir, comme Averroes le dit d'Aristote' (*De la recherche de la vérité*, in *Oeuvres complètes* II, p. 340).

[10] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 26 and 228; Id., *The* Instauratio Magna *Part II*: Novum Organum *and Associated Texts*, eds Graham Rees and Maria Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 113.

[11] Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *Mes pensées*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Roger Caillois (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), n. 2189, p. 1569: 'Ce furent les Mahométans (Maures d'Espagne) qui portèrent les sciences en Occident. Depuis ce temps-là, ils n'ont jamais voulu reprendre ce qu'ils nous avoient donné.'

[12] Jean Le Clerc, *Epistolario*, eds Maria Grazia and Mario Sina (Florence: Olschki, 1987–1997), IV, pp. 57 and 691.

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Aristotle and the Averroists,'[13] another *topos* established itself representing Averroes as an unscrupulous thinker with respect to religion, and sometimes even as an unbeliever.[14] It is highly significant that the only mention of Averroes in the work of David Hume is to a highly ironic remark on the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, namely on the 'real presence' of the body of Christ in the consecrated Host given to the faithful; it is a remark traditionally attributed to Averroes which Hume quotes with evident relish:

> It must be allowed, that the Roman Catholics are a very learned sect; and that no one communion, but that of the church of England, can dispute their being the most learned of all the Christian churches: Yet Averroes, the famous Arabian, who, no doubt, had heard of the Egyptian superstitions [previously quoted through Herodotus], declares, that, of all religions, the most absurd and nonsensical is that, whose votaries eat, after having created, their deity.[15]

Neither Hume nor his editors took the trouble to indicate the source of this vitriolic remark, but it is clear that it was inspired by *remarque* H from the article *Averroes* in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697, 1702). I have analysed this article elsewhere and also touched on the treatment meted out to Averroes in Johann Jacob Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*, which came out in Leipzig in the years 1742–1744.[16] Here I would like to move our investigation to the period (spanning roughly a century) which preceded the appearance of Brucker's celebrated work, when *historia philosophica* assumed the characteristics of a literary genre in its own right, which included the entire history of philosophy, from its origins up until the present day, and was quick to carry out a strategic function in modern European culture. The aim is to illustrate the place given to Averroes, and to Islamic thought more generally, in this longer-term perspective, and to point out any oscillations or variants in the presentation of our philosopher from Cordoba. There is nothing exciting – we have to say – regarding Bayle's treatment, which is characterised by a fundamental disquiet and by ambiguities and implications of great doctrinal weight. But it is interesting to define the image of Averroes as transmitted by a field of research, namely the history of philosophy, which thanks to Ernest Renan was later to rediscover this thinker, no longer confined to the narrow role of Commentator.

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[13] Antonio Genovesi, *Dissertatio physico-historica de rerum origine et constitutione* [1745], eds Sara Boneschi and Maurizio Torrini (Florence: Giunti, 2001), p. 187 (cf. Maria Teresa Marcialis, 'Storia della scienza e universalità del senso comune in Antonio Genovesi', in *Identità nazionale e valori universali nella moderna storiografia filosofica*, eds Gregorio Piaia and Riccardo Pozzo [Padua: CLEUP, 2008], pp. 53–71).

[14] See Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 621–622.

[15] David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, in Id., *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, eds T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898; repr. Aalen: Scientia, 1964), II, p. 343.

[16] See my 'L'immagine di Averroè in Pierre Bayle', forthcoming in the Acts of the Symposium *Averroès, l'averroïsme, l'antiaverroïsme* (held in Geneva in 2006), ed. Alain de Libera.

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The first writer to consider is naturally Georg Horn, known with the Latin name Hornius (1620–1670), who was a professor of Universal History at the University of Leiden and whose *Historiae philosophicae libri septem* (published in Leiden in 1655, but written as early as 1640) shows the level of maturity reached by the genre of the history of philosophy, both as to periodization ('from the creation of the world to our times') and as to its method of exposition and its use of sources.[17] Two of the 89 chapters into which the book is divided are devoted to *philosophia Arabica*. The first of these (book 5, ch. 9) mentions its remotest origins, dating back to Ham and Canaan, the son and grandson of Noah, who settled in Arabia and Palestine, and who were both followers of *philosophia Cainitica*, i.e., those glimmers of primitive revelation that Adam had transmitted to his descendents after being banished from the Garden of Eden. Great importance is then given to the figure of Job, who lived in the land of Uz, held to be near to Arabia.[18] He is attributed with having written a *liber dialecticus*, resulting from his discussions with friends, they too considered 'philosophers'; indeed, he founded schools and was the first to initiate that method of *disputatio* which was still used in the universities in Horn's time.[19] Our historiographer is therefore inclined to place in the Near East the origin of a philosophical discipline which was usually seen as a typical product of the Greek world: he opposes Diogenes Laertius's Hellenocentrism (which had inspired many humanist and Renaissance treatises) with a universalistic vision of the history of philosophy inspired by the Platonic and Augustinian tradition, which drove him to re-evaluate and emphasise the wisdom of the Near East.

After the age of Job, philosophy was absent from the Arabs until the advent of Muhammad, the 'monster' (*monstrum illud Muhammed*), who – in Horn's opinion – surpassed everyone in talking nonsense (*nugae*); most able at simulating and dissimulating (*sagax, fallax, summus simulandi et dissimulandi artifex*), he collected the contents of the Quran, a work defined as *opera collatitia*, from various sources. It might seem strange, admits Horn, to place Muhammad among the philosophers, given that according to a certain tradition he prohibited the study of the liberal arts and philosophy. But the perplexity is resolved by recourse to an analogy with the

[17] Cf. Luciano Malusa, 'The First General Histories of Philosophy in England and in the Low Countries', in *Models of the History of Philosophy,* I: *From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia Philosophica'*, ed. Giovanni Santinello, trans. Constance W. T. Blackwell and Philip Weller (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer, 1993), pp. 236–259.

[18] Georg Horn, *Historiae philosophicae libri septem, quibus de origine, successione, sectis et vita philosophorum ab orbe condito usque ad nostram aetatem agitur* (Leiden: Jean Elsevier, 1655), p. 284: 'Fuit insignis Philosophiae doctor, cui neque antiquior, neque doctior, neque sublimior ex tota antiquitate, opponi potest.' There follows a quotation from Justus Lipsius, where Job is mentioned – in the company of Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, Epictetus, and Arrian – among those who were inspired by the spirit of the truth, even though they did not belong to the chosen people.

[19] Ibid., p. 284: 'Amici ejus et ipsi in Philosophia doctissimi, procul dubio ex Jobi Schola profecti, cum perpetuis paralogismis ludant, egregie a Jobo convincuntur … Nec antiquiores disputationes habemus quam quae in ejus opere mirabile occurrunt. Amici ejus sunt, uti nunc loquuntur, opponentes, ipse autem respondet. Quod disputandi genus inventum a Jobo Ambrosius [*De officiis*, I, 12] tradit.'

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Greek world: just as the ancient Sceptics are counted among the philosophers, even though they radically contested the doctrines of all the other philosophers, so Muhammad can also be given the title 'philosopher', even though he did not make any contribution to the development of this discipline.[20] But now, with the spread of the evil (*malum*) from Arabia to vast areas of Asia and Africa, 'under the caliphate of al-Maʾmūn the Arabs transferred to themselves equally all Greek and Latin philosophy'. This event was occasioned, according to Arabic writers, by a dream which the Caliph had, in which the ghost of Aristotle appeared to him. It was thus that, after having conquered the Byzantine emperor Michael III, the Caliph al-Maʾmūn imposed as a condition of peace free access to the books which contained the wisdom of the ancient Greeks: a delegation went to Constantinople and bought up the rarest books on philosophy, geodesy, music, arithmetic, and medicine, and brought them to Baghdad, even though this aroused criticism from those who considered this foreign fashion (*peregrinitas*) to be harmful to Islam.[21] The Greeks had a different version of this *translatio* of philosophy to the Arabs: here Horn quotes a long passage from the *Sarracenicae historiae libri tres* (1596) by Celio Agostino Curione (whom he confuses with Celio Secondo Curione), which tells the story of Leo bishop of Thessalonica, 'insignis philosophus', who had moved to Constantinople in order to avoid the controversy over images and had devoted himself there to private teaching. Among his pupils was a young man who became very skilled in geometry and who was taken prisoner by the Arabs; when he showed them his skill he was called to the court of al-Maʾmūn. The caliph knew who his master was and wrote to Leo to invite him to Baghdad, but the Byzantine emperor refused to give his consent, 'ne scientias, quarum causa Romani, cunctis gentibus admirationi erant, barbaris proderentur', and instead heaped honours on the bishop Leo.[22]

The other chapter (book V, ch. x) deals with the Arabic philosophers, with a final word on Jewish thinkers, who, 'since they generally lived together with the Saracens, from these they received the knowledge of philosophy.'[23] The overall opinion is highly positive, for *philosophia Arabica*, solidly based on writers such as Aristotle

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[20] Ibid., p. 286: 'Mirum autem fortasse cuidam videbitur, cur Muhammedem catalogo Philosophorum accenseamus, qui tamen omnes literas omneque studium disciplinarum Philosophicarum publico edicto et armis proscripserit. Cujus instituti nostri hanc rationem damus. Quemadmodum Academici, Pyrrhonii et Sceptici, ea de caussa quoque Philosophis accensentur, quia aliorum Philosophorum placita et dicta confutarunt vel rejecerunt, ita Muhammedem quoque Philosophis accenseri, non quod aliquid magni invenerit, sed quia, quae ab aliis bene constituta erant, omnia rejecerit.' See John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Id.,'"Saracen Philosophers Secretly Deride Islam"', *Medieval Encounters*, 8 (2002), pp. 184–208.

[21] Horn, *Historia philosophica*, pp. 286–287. See Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998). He deals with al-Maʾmūn's dream.

[22] Horn, *Historia philosophica*, pp. 287–289. The chapter ends with a reference to the 'numerous Academies' active in the Turkish and Persian Empires in Horn's time.

[23] Ibid., p. 294.

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and Galen, is clearly distinguished both from the *fabula* of the Quran and the *sunna* (Muhammad's sayings and deeds as recorded in prophetical traditions called *ḥadīth*) and from the philosophies which give too much space to the imaginings of the ancients or to 'novelties.'[24] Horn summarises the genesis of *philosophia Arabica* as follows: having come across some of Aristotle's writings, by that time almost unknown to the Greeks themselves, the Arabs translated them into their language, which they loved greatly, to then go on to translate 'the great majority of the greatest books of the Greeks and the Latins.' The translations fell into the hands of very acute minds, who were gradually won over by the 'ardour of the most subtle philosophy.' There had been lively cultural interest, above all in mathematical studies, for several centuries in that area, but what had been lacking was a unifying element that could act as a guide, and which was finally provided by the Aristotelian philosophy (the reference is obviously to the method of logic).[25]

Of the many Arabic philosophers whose works are preserved in the well-stocked libraries of the Near East and North Africa, Horn notes that very few are known to us. The works that are known are by Avicenna, Averroes, al-Fārābī, 'Abi Abdillas' [= Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad or Abū 'Abdallāh al-Battānī?] and Albumasar). [AU1] Avicenna, presented as the greatest interpreter of Aristotle, is given most space: one page (while Averroes is given only a third of a page), which is mostly concerned with an anecdote on the act of plagiarism allegedly at the origin of the works of this great philosopher. Relying on *Arabia* (1633), a work by the erudite Maronite Gabriel Sionita (1577?–1648), Horn in fact recounts that in Bukhara there lived a very famous physician who was highly jealous of his knowledge, to such an extent that he would only employ ignorant servants. The mother of the young Avicenna, desirous of securing a good education for her son, presented him to the physician as being deaf and dumb, and hence unable to study anything (*ineptus ad omnia studia*). The physician took him on as his servant, and, to put him to the test, dropped pieces of bronze near his ears several times; the young man, however, did not react in any way. Reassured, the physician left his papers unguarded, which his young servant transcribed and published in his own name, after their author's death.[26]

As for Averroes, Horn presents him as Avicenna's contemporary and great adversary (in reality he was born 146 years later). Although both were followers of Aristotle, they were in complete doctrinal disagreement. Horn does not indulge in anecdotes here, perhaps because of a lack of sources, but limits himself to brief snippets of information: the followers of Averroes, known as Averroists, were and

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[24] Ibid., pp. 289–290: 'Non enim ea [*sc*. philosophia Arabica] est ridicula ex Alcorani aut Sunae fabulis, non etiam ex commentis veterum conflata aut novitatibus incrustata, sed usi institutione praestantissimorum et probatissimorum authorum, Aristotelis, Galeni, eorum vestigia sedulo secuti sunt.'

[25] Ibid., p. 290: 'Erat tamen illa ipsa sapientia quasi duce destituta, qui totum agmen componeret, confusa ordinaret, daretque ipsi corpori certum statum. Quod cum divinus Aristoteles apud Graecos vel solus praestitisset, factum inde, ut non Graecis modo, sed et (quis putasset?) Arabibus author emendandi confusissimam congeriem fuerit.'

[26] Ibid., p. 291. See Gabriel Sionita, *Arabia, seu Arabum vicinarumque gentium orientalium leges, ritus, sacri et profani mores, instituta et historia* (Amsterdam: Jean Jansson, 1633), pp. 16–19.

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still are *(et hodie et olim*) involved in great controversies (*magnae contentiones*) with other philosophers, above all in Italy; Averroes is granted the title 'Commentator' thanks to his writings on Aristotle, which the Scholastics borrowed from heavily; *dulcis in fundo*, Averroes 'considered Aristotle to be the god of wisdom and thought that he was immune to mistakes.' Horn refers back to this last statement a little further on, when, after quoting an opinion of Pico's on the Arabic philosophers,[27] he mentions their limitations (*defectus*). As they lived in an uncivilised condition (*in media barbarie*) and therefore they lacked any form of linguistic and philological proficiency, these thinkers could in effect only count on their own genius. To this can be added another fault, i.e., 'that, as long as they consider Aristotle to be some sort of god of wisdom who cannot err, more often than not they err with their erring Aristotle.' And this is the most serious limit: the impossibility of reading Aristotle in his own language or in a 'tolerable' translation, given that those available were largely deteriorated and faulty (*multis in locis mutilae, perversae, corruptae*), and what is more Aristotle's style was for the Greeks themselves *concisum et interruptum*.[28]

The brief and aseptic portrait of Averroes outlined by Horn can function within the more general framework of *philosophia Arabica* as a means of comparison with other authors of *historia philosophica*. Among these a prominent place is occupied by the famous erudite Johannes Gerhard Voss, better known in his Latinised name Vossius (1577–1649), who was professor of history at the University of Amsterdam from 1633 to his death, and whose *De philosophia et philosophorum sectis libri duo* came out posthumously in The Hague in 1657–1658, edited by his son Isaac.[29] In the *De philosophia*, Averroes is mentioned as 'the' commentator and as a physician, involved in both medical theory and practice (*medicus non tam practicus quam theoreticus*). Relying on Giles of Rome's testimony, Vossius presents Averroes as a contemporary of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. As the good erudite he was, given the lack of information available on Averroes, Vossius declares he will insert an extract from an unedited work by Johannes Leo Africanus (1494–1554), but evidently could not find the text among his papers since its lack is indicated by the verb 'Desunt' in the middle of a blank space.[30] Averroes is treated at greater length in

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[27] Horn, *Historia philosophica*, p. 292: 'De Arabum Philosophis ita judicat Joh. Picus Mirandolanus, in Apologia pro XC. [*sic*] Thesibus: "Est, inquit, apud Arabes in Averroe firmum quiddam & inconcussum in Avenpace, in Alpharabio grave & meditatum, in Avicenna divinum atque Platonicum".'

[28] Ibid., pp. 292–293.

[29] On Vossius see the contribution by Luciano Malusa in *Models of the History of Philosophy*, I, pp. 222–235.

[30] Gerhard Johann Vossius, *Operum tomus tertius philologicus: De artium et scientiarum natura ac constitutione libri quinque* (Amsterdam: P. & J. Blaev, 1696), p. 261b. Johannes Leo Africanus is the Christian name of the geographer al-ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Wazzān, who lived in Rome for a time after being captured by pirates; he was the author of a *Descrittione dell'Africa* (written in Arabic and published in Italian in Venice in 1550 and in Latin in Antwerp in 1556) and died in Tunis after 1554. On Leo Africanus, see now Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

Editor's Proof

chapter 17 ('De Peripateticis') of *De philosophorum sectis*. Here he is defined as the *princeps* of the Arabic Aristotelian commentators and the fact that he did not know Greek is seen not as a limit but almost as a point of merit.[31] The brief biographical information (the *Colliget* is also mentioned) ends, however, with a criticism of Averroes's rationalistic and anti-Christian positions:

> That such a great philosopher was short-sighted concerning the true and only path to salvation is proved by his saying that he preferred to be with the philosophers rather than the Christians.[32]

The accusation of 'impiety' brought against Averroes was to find a great vehicle of diffusion in the entry which Louis Moreri (1643–1680) devoted to him in his popular *Dictionnaire historique* (Lyon, 1674) which Bayle himself used in his article on Averroes. After providing some essential biographical information, Moreri reminds us that in the second book of his *Quodlibeta* Giles of Rome

> deplores the blindness of such a great man, who, having no religion, said that he preferred to have his soul in the company of philosophers rather than Christians. Others report the matter differently. Averroes characterised the Christian religion as 'impossible' because of the mystery of Eucharist. He called the religion of the Jews a religion of children owing to the various precepts and legal observations. He admitted that the religion of the Muslims, which is all focused on satisfying the senses, is a religion of pigs, and then he exclaimed: 'Let my soul die of the philosophers's death.'[33]

The *topos* of the 'impious' Averroes is found again, for example, in the chapter *De interpretibus Aristotelis Arabicis* of the *Polyhistor philosophicus*, by another champion of seventeenth-century erudition, Daniel Georg Morhof (1639–1691).[34] In this rich bio-bibliographical review, organised according to the great historical and cultural periods, we also find a reference to *De scriptoribus Arabicis* by Johannes Leo Africanus, which had been edited in the meantime by that most erudite theologian

Uncorrected Proof

[31] Vossius, *Operum tomus tertius philologicus*, p. 307a: 'Qui Graece nescius feliciter adeo mentem Aristotelis perspexit, quid non fecisset, si linguam scisset Graecam?'

[32] Ibid., p. 307b: 'Quam parum viderit tantus Philosophus in vera et unica salutis via, arguit illud, quod diceret, malle se animam suam esse cum Philosophis, quam cum Christianis.'

[33] Louis Moreri, *Le grand dictionaire historique, ou le mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane*, 4 vols, 8th edn (Amsterdam – The Hague: Henry Desbordes, Compagnies des libraires, 1698), I, 307b. Besides Giles of Rome, the bibliography placed at the end of the entry *Averroez* also includes Vossius, Giovanni Pico, and three authors of lives of the most illustrious mathematicians and physicians: Jan Antonides Van der Linden, Pieter Casteele (Castellanus), and the Jesuit Giuseppe Biancani.

[34] Daniel Georg Morhof, *Polyhistor literarius, philosophicus et practicus*, II: *Polyhistor philosophicus*, 4th edn (Lübeck: Peter Boeckmann, 1747; repr. Aalen: Scientia, 1970), 1, 10, 2, p. 53: 'Fuit vero impius homo Averroës, & profanis sententiis plenus.' The first edition came out in Lubeck in 1688–1692. Cf. Ilario Tolomio, *The 'Historia Philosophica' in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in *Models of the History of Philosophy*, I: *From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia Philosophica'*, pp. 82–85.

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and Orientalist Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667).[35] The entry on Averroes is very short, ten lines in all (even less space than is dedicated to Avicenna, who receives three and a half lines; in the previous chapter, for example, Alexander of Aphrodisias is given 17 lines, Themistius 11, and Simplicius 24). Morhof mentions the 1575 Giunti edition in detail, pointing out that it also includes a paraphrase of Plato's *Republic*, and for more information on Averroes he refers to Jacopo Gaddi's *De scriptoribus non ecclesiasticis Graecis, Latinis, Italicis* (Florence 1648–1649), while for a refutation for Averroes's position, he points to the *Castigationes adversus Averroëm* by Ambrogio Leone of Nola (1457–1525), a monumental work in 45 volumes printed in Venice by his son Camillo between 1517 and 1532.

Horn, Vossius, and Morhof were learned men; but in the second half of the seventeenth century, primarily in France, *historia philosophica* was also practised by men of letters seeking to address a wider public, and thereby preferring to write in the vulgar tongue. This is true of the Jesuit René Rapin (1621–1687), famous among his contemporaries for his bucolic Latin poetry, but who was also the author of a series of *Réflexions* on various aspects of 'belles lettres', among which his *Réflexions sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne, et sur l'usage qu'on en doit faire pour la religion* (1676), which enjoyed great popularity and was translated into English, Latin, and German.[36] In this work Arabic philosophy is dealt with in a short chapter – barely two pages – between passages on ancient Christian thought and Scholasticism. In this chapter, Rapin relies on *De causis corruptarum artium* by Juan Luis Vives (1531), the *Bibliotheca selecta* by Possevino, Aquinas's *Contra Averroistas*, the *Lectionum antiquarum libri* by Celio Rodigino, and Giovanni Pico,[37] first stressing how the the Arabs carried out 'a sort of revolution' in the cultural field, a revolution which corresponds to the great changes they produced 'dans l'Empire' (in the geopolitical field, that is), then identifying in the subtlety and abstract nature of their national character, the peculiarity and at the same time the defect of their philosophy:

> The character of their minds – subtle, dreamy and deep –, which attached them to Aristotle's text in a manner that was too literal, made them take an abstract way of reasoning, which is somehow different from the solidity of the Greeks and the Latins. And although there seemed

[35] Johann Heinrich Hottinger, *Bibliothecarius quadripartitus* (Zurich: Melechior Stauffacher, 1664), pp. 246–294. Averroes is dealt with on pp. 271–279: the biography, enlivened by a number of anecdotes, which starts with Averroes's Arabic name and family, stresses his qualities ('vir prudens, patiens, liberalis ac pius'), examines the charge of heresy brought against him by a number of Muslim theologians, and ends with a list of his major works and the date and place of his death. On Hottinger, see Jan Loop, 'Johan Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667) and the *Historia Orientalis*', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88 (2008), pp. 169–203.

[36] See Gregorio Piaia, 'The General Histories of Philosophy in France and in Italy 1650–1750', in *Models of the History of Philosophy*, II*: From the Cartesian Age to Brucker*, eds Gregorio Piaia and Giovanni Santinello (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 29–50.

[37] René Rapin, *Les réflexions sur l'éloquence, la poëtique, l'histoire et la philosophie. Avec le jugement qu'on doit faire des auteurs qui se sont signalez dans ces quatre parties des belles lettres*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam: Abraham Wolfgang, 1693), pp. 338–340.

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> to be a great deal of subtlety in this fashion of philosophizing, we should nevertheless admit that this new character of reason seemed false, because of the errors into which Avicenna, Al Kindi, Al Gazel, Averroes, Al Farabi, Albohazen and some other fell. These are the errors reported by Possevino in book 3 of his *Bibliotheca*, and their number is huge.[38]

Rapin's opinion thus appears to oscillate between a recognition of the splendour achieved by Arabic culture and a denunciation of the excesses of their philosophy, which to him resulted in making not only biased, but incomprehensible and incommunicable theses.[39] This ambivalence in apparent in his treatment of Averroes: Rapin quotes the negative opinion of Aquinas, for whom Averroes was, more than a follower, 'a corruptor of the doctrine of Aristotle;' but he reminds us soon after that 'for the profundity of his genius dreaming-natured, and for the study he made of Aristotle, he deserves to be called his Commentator,' thereby founding a sect of philosophers which took his name and took issue with the Greek commentators of Aristotle. Unfortunately, given that he knew the works of Aristotle through a bad translation, 'he incurred changes in sense so horrible that Bagolino, a philosopher from Verona, Zimara, and Mantino tried in vain to correct him.' According to Rapin, however, the difference between the 'genius' of the Greek language and that of the Arabic language renders translations between the two almost impossible.[40]

In the same years in which the Jesuit Rapin published his *Réflexions sur la philosophie*, the Calvinist Pierre de Villemandy (1736/37-1703), professor of Philosophy at the Protestant Academy of Saumur, published a textbook comparing the philosophies of Aristotle, Epicurus, and Descartes, and further containing a brief history of philosophy. Arabic thought is given half a page, most of it taken from the work by Horn[41]; it is worth pointing out, however, the role of Averroes in Villemandy's periodization, which differed from the most popular scheme of the time, and was based on the distinction between *philosophia vetus* and *philosophia nova*. Villemandy in fact adopts the evolutionary framework characteristic of the development of an organic nature: 'nascent philosophy' (from Cain to the various 'barbaric' philosophies), 'adolescent philosophy' (from the ancient legislators to ancient Greek and Christian thought), and 'adult philosophy', in turn divided into four periods. The

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[38] Ibid., p. 338. On Rapin's interest in the theme of 'national characteristics' in philosophy, see Gregorio Piaia, 'European Identity and National Characteristics in the *Historia Philosophica* of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 34 (1996), pp. 593–605 (596–597).

[39] Rapin, *Réflexions sur l'éloquence, la poëtique, l'histoire et la philosophie*, p. 339: 'Mais outre que la Philosophie devint pointilleuse sous les Arabes, par ces precisions et par ces concepts abstraits, qu'elle introduit dans l'école, elle devint aussi tout à fait sauvage dans ses expressions: la raison ayant, pour ainsi dire, desappris à se montrer sous des termes raisonnables. Il faut avoüer toutefois que les Arabes, par la qualité de leur esprit, et par le loisir que la prosperité de leurs armes, et l'abondance leur causa, s'appliquerent tellement à l'étude des Mathematiques et de la Philosophie, qu'ils devinrent en ces temps-là les premiers sçavans du monde.'

[40] Ibid.

[41] Pierre de Villemandy, *Manuductio ad philosophiae Aristoteleae, Epicureae et Cartesianae, parallelismum*, 4th edn (Amsterdam: Henry Wetsten and Henry Desbordes, 1685), pp. 71–72. On this work, see Piaia, 'The General Histories of Philosophy in France and in Italy', pp. 50–58.

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first goes from Averroes to Albertus Magnus, who initiated Scholasticism; the second from Albertus to the Humanists (notably Lorenzo Valla, Angelo Poliziano, Rudolph Agricola and Luis Vives), the third includes the schools of Leuven and Coimbra; and the fourth the contemporary Aristotelians, followers of Epicurus (Gassendi), Cartesians and proponents of 'elective' philosophy, i.e., eclecticism. Averroes is placed at the beginning of 'adult philosophy' for his role in re-establishing (*instauravit*) the philosophy of Aristotle, which had disappeared by the end of the sixth century.[42]

Besides this erudite or didactic literature there developed, again mainly in France, another current involving Averroes that can be placed half way between populist works on the history of philosophy and literary entertainment. A typical example of this is Laurent Bordelon's *Théatre philosophique*. Bordelon (1653–1730) was a highly prolific writer with many cultural interests. Inspired by the *Dialogues of the Dead* by Lucian of Samosata, Bordelon imagines a series of dialogue taking place in the Champs Elysées between 30 pairs of philosophers both ancient (among whom Confucius) and modern, with each dialogue including a brief biographical profile of the two interlocutors. Two thinkers are included from the medieval period: Averroes and Arnald of Villanova. Averroes's interlocutor is the Greek Bion the Borysthenite, known for his paradoxical attitude, which he in turn accuses Averroes of. It is Bion in fact who opens the skirmish, declaring that he admires the singular good fortune (*bon-heur*) enjoyed by Averroes, who has earned himself the title of the Arististotelian commentator by antonomasia without any knowledge of Greek. Averroes replies that his interlocutor's fortune is much greater, since – according to what is recounted among the living – he had initially professed himself to be an atheist, and after a serious illness, had then asked the pardon of the gods.[43] Caught out in this way, Bion defends himself by saying he knows nothing of this, but Averroes persists, observing that this ignorance derives from the fact that things did not go the way they are said to have gone. Bion then tries to elude the question with an ironic remark on the Commentator[44]; Averroes does not let go of his prey however and reveals the most hidden and cynical motivations behind Bion's attitude with a taste for psychological analysis that recalls the *maximes* of the duke de La Rochefoucauld and other great French moralists of the seventeenth century:

> but, regarding something you said, I think I am not making a rush judgment if I imagine that this repentance at the time of your death is no indication of a better faith than that of an infinite number of people, who come to this place every day from the other world and die regretting their sins because they think they will no longer able to commit them; they turn

[42] Villemandy, *Manuductio*, pp. 72–76.

[43] See Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, IV, 55–56.

[44] Laurent Bordelon, *Théatre philosophique, sur lequel on represente par des Dialogues dans les Champs Elisées les philosophes anciens & modernes, et où l'on rapporte ensuite leurs opinions, leurs reparties, leurs sentences & les plus remarquables actions de leur vie* (Paris: Claude Barbin and Jean Musier, 1692), p. 226: 'A ce que je vois, vous étes si habile en commentaire, que vous voulez en faire aussi sur cette action, quoy que vous n'en sachiez pas plus toutes les circonstances, que le Grec des ouvrages d'Aristote.'

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Editor's Proof

> they eyes to the side of the gods, for they have realised that, if they had turned them to the side of the world, they would have been treated only with indifference and abandoned. Finally, there are here people who acknowledge in all honesty that they showed virtue and piety when dying only to make the most of their reputation and leave a good image of themselves at the moment of leaving the world.[45]

At this point in the dispute Bion can only insist on the *beau talent* displayed by his interlocutor in the field of the commentary, while Averroes remains in charge of the situation and points out in a satisfied tone that his adversary has no answer to make. There follows a biographical profile of Bion and a much shorter one of Averroes, both taken from Moreri's dictionary.[46]

Much longer is the biography of Averroes contained in the *Eloges et caracteres des philosophes les plus célébres* [*sic*] by a certain Dupont-Bertris. This work of philosophical popularization came out in 1726 and presents itself as a continuation of the *Abrégé des vies des anciens philosophes* attributed to François Fénelon (1651–1715) and published the same year.[47] Echoing, at least in the title, famous works such as *The Characters* by Theophrastus and La Bruyère and Fontenelle's *Éloges des Académiciens*, Dupont-Bertris gives us a biography of 15 thinkers starting with Seneca and Plutarch and ending with Leibniz. Among these are also two Muslims, Avicenna and Averroes, who both receive the same number of pages.[48] Avicenna is presented as the 'Arabic' thinker 'whose principles best accord with those of our holy religion,' even though he committed a number of doctrinal errors.[49] Averroes on the other hand is presented as a rationalist indifferent to any positive religion, but is nevertheless saved – albeit in general terms – from the accusation of dangerous impiety.[50] His principal errors concern the unity of the Intellect, the eternity of the world, and the exclusion of singular individuals from the action of divine providence. Following Vives, Dupont-Bertris attributes Averroes's great fortune to the obscurity of his writings, but also recognises in him 'a basis of real merit.' Intent on going beyond existing prejudices to oscillate between two opposing opinions,

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[45] Ibid., pp. 226–228.

[46] Ibid., pp. 234–235.

[47] See Piaia, 'The General Histories of Philosophy in France and in Italy 1650–1750', pp. 151–157.

[48] Dupont-Bertris, *Eloges et caracteres des philosophes les plus célébres, depuis la Naissance de Jesus-Christ, jusqu'à présent* (Paris: chez Henri-Simon-Pierre Gissey, 1726), pp. 61–83 (Avicenna), 119–142 (Averroes). These are in practice small 12° pages (*livre de poche* format) each with a mere 720 characters. See Gregorio Piaia, 'Philosophical Historiography in France from Bayle to Deslandes', in *Models of the History of Philosophy*, II: *From the Cartesian Age to Brucker*, pp. 93–175 (151).

[49] Ibid., pp. 69 and 73.

[50] Ibid., pp. 135–138: 'Il n'y a qu'un esprit prévenu, et qu'une imagination échauffée, qui puissent vouloir nous faire croire que les ouvrages d'Averroez rendent impies leurs lecteurs [indeed Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, etc. read them without harming their faith in any way…] … Convenons de bonne foi, qu'il ne paroît pas que le philosophe Arabe ait goûté aucune religion. C'étoit un philosophe entièrement dévoué aux lumières de sa raison … L'epithète de scélerat ne convint jamais à Averroez.'

Editor's Proof

ultimately he appears to take note of them without possessing any particular competence in the matter.[51]

Different and more philosophically characterised is the presence of Averroes in the *Anleitung zur Historie der Leibnitzisch-Wolffischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt and Leipzig 1737) by the German physician and philosopher Georg Volckmar Hartmann. This systematic account of the thought of Christian Wolff is preceded by a historical review of the agreement and disagreement between reason and faith, and on the utility of philosophy for theology. In this context references to the work of Averroes as an Aristotelian commentator are not lacking, nor are references to his doctrinal positions (the 'double truth') and those of the Averroists, a sect, notes Hartmann, which was later supplanted by 'corpuscular philosophy.'[52] This *Historische Nachricht* is similarly preceded by the biographies of the philosophers who have been quoted the most: we thus find Averroes listed after Aristotle and followed by the likes of Descartes, Bayle, Leibniz, Wolff, Johann Joachim Lange (an adversary of Wolff), and Franz Budde. The *Kurtze Nachricht vom dem Leben Averrhöis* quotes the information supplied by Moreri and Bayle on Averroes's anti-religious attitude, mentions his commentaries, and stresses the influence these had on scholastic philosophy and then on the mixing of philosophy and theology. The biographical profile closes with a word on the denial of the immortality of the soul and a reference to the Giunti edition of 1573–1575.[53]

Let us close our investigation with the first great general history of philosophy written in French, the *Histoire critique de la philosophie* by André-François Boureau-Deslandes (1737), which precedes by several years Brucker's similarly-titled *Historia critica philosophiae*. Highly criticised by Brucker for having failed to distinguish properly between the history of philosophy and the history of culture, in reality Deslandes's work can be placed at the crossroads between seventeenth-century *historia philosophica*, the critical spirit diffused by Pierre Bayle, and that *histoire de l'esprit humain* which was to enjoy great favour in France in the eighteenth century, but also in Germany, thanks to writers like Herder and Christoph Meiners.[54] The approach which Deslandes takes to historiographical investigation is particularly interesting, because it gives space to judgements on the historical, religious, and cultural context in which the Arabic philosophers worked. In presenting

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[51] Ibid., p. 123: 'Tout ce qu'on a dit de merveilleux sur Averroez a occasionné un examen sérieux de ses ouvrages, qui dans les uns a confirmé les premières idées, et qui dans les autres les a entièrement détruites.'

[52] Georg Volckmar Hartmann, *Anleitung zur Historie der Leibnitzisch-Wolffischen Philosophie*, in Christian Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke*, III. *Materialien und Dokumente*, IV (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1973), pp. 138–144.

[53] Ibid., pp. 7–8. On the developments of *historia philosophica* in Germany before Kant see also Marco Sgarbi's chapter in this volume.

[54] See Piaia, 'The General Histories of Philosophy in France and in Italy 1650–1750', pp. 177–211; Mario Longo, 'Scuola di Gottinga e *Popularphilosophie*', in *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*, ed. Giovanni Santinello, 5 vols (Brescia and Padua: La Scuola and Antenore, 1979–2004), III, pp. 690–694, 722–758.

Editor's Proof

the Islamic world, Deslandes is doubly critical. If, on the one hand, he does not show much indulgence towards the prophet Muhammad, defined as 'more astute and dissimulating than bold,' on the other, he criticises the 'ignorance, by the Christians, of the uses and customs of the Mohammedans,' unjustly accused of following a corrupt and immoral lifestyle, when it is their habit to carry out regularly that which in the Christian tradition are known as the works of bodily mercy, and what is more they treat foreigners with the utmost respect; thus, Deslandes notes with some sarcasm, someone like Abelard, who had to suffer so many tribulations among the Christians, would have lived serenely among the Muslims.[55]

Deslandes dwells on the cultural development at the time of the caliph al-Ma'mūn; indeed the splendour of sciences in Islamic lands causes him to apply the concept of *horror vacui* to the history of philosophy and to outline a true theory of cultural progress in which the Arabs seem to play a role equal to that of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, and the twelfth century (the century of Averroes) is compared respectively to the century of Alexander the Great and to that of Augustus.[56] He reviews the various fields of Arabic culture, understood in a broad sense, beyond the confines of philosophy. As for 'the progress they made in the study of Physics,' it is all referred back to the 'books of Aristotle,' translated into Arabic 'rather unfaithfully' and becoming the object of an 'almost divine cult,' in which al-Fārābī, Avicenna and above all Averroes stand out. This 'servile admiration' for Aristotle ended up corrupting the human mind and giving rise to a 'tumultuous and barely intelligible philosophy, which was content with words and formulas invented at will, and which further added to the difficulties thanks to the obscure way in which attempts were made to resolve them'.[57] Suited by nature to speculation, the Arabs became such 'profound metaphysicians' following in the steps of Aristotle that they were overwhelmed by an infinite number of questions. They managed, however, to create a semblance of order by recourse to two general principles, placed at the foundation of their vision of the world:

> The first, that all the parts of the universe correspond to each other, the higher to the lower ones, and that they participate in the same soul. The second, that this soul always exists, but it is divided into an infinite number of parts corresponding to each single being, and these parts go back to the universal mass when that particular being persishes. This is precisely Avveroes's opinion, and his enemies find in this view a strong hue of atheism, all the more so because he does not recognise any other God apart from that universal intelligence, that ocean of minds in which each human being participates.[58]

[55] [André-François Boureau Deslandes], *Histoire critique de la philosophie, où l'on traite de son origine, de ses progrez, et des diverses révolutions qui lui sont arrivées jusqu'à notre tems*, 3 vols (Amsterdam: François Changuion, 1737), III, p. 239.

[56] Ibid., p. 243: 'Il semble que la Nature ne puisse souffrir de vuide, ni d'éclipse. Les siècles où le Christianisme étoit plongé dans une barbarie honteuse, furent les siècles mêmes où les Arabes se distinguerent le plus. Il faut seulement observer que le douzième est leur siècle favori, leur siècle de distinction. Ils le regardoient de même oeil que les Grecs regardoient celui d'Alexandre, & les Romains celui d'Auguste.'

[57] Ibid., p. 256, where Deslandes refers explicitly to book V of the *De causis corruptarum artium* by Vives.

[58] Ibid., III, pp. 257–258.

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This passage concludes Deslandes's treatment of the philosopher of Cordoba (though a little further on there is also a reference to his evaluation of theoretical and practical medicine).[59] Though Deslandes does not express a personal opinion, it is likely that Averroes's marked Aristotelianism aroused in him an attitude of clear prejudiced rejection. We cannot, however, exclude that the libertine Deslandes could have been sensitive to the pantheism (*cet Océan d'Esprits*) which he attributed to Averroes in odour of unbelief. Perhaps the ambiguous game of mirrors that was later to characterise the interpretations of Averroes finds its first expression in Deslandes, as well as in Pierre Bayle.

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[59] Ibid., p. 261.

Editor's Proof

Author Query

Chapter No.: 12 0001629573

Query	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please provide the opening parenthesis of the sentence "[= Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad or Abū; 'Abdallāh al–Battānī?]] and Albumasar)."	

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Chapter 13
Immanuel Kant, Universal Understanding, and the Meaning of Averroism in the German Enlightenment

[AU1] **Marco Sgarbi**

Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras,
Perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna.[1]

The Presence of Averroistic Motifs in the German Enlightenment

Did early modern German thinkers stop paying attention to Averroes? Were there hidden undercurrents of Averroism during the eighteenth century in Germany? How did German authors in this period contextualise Averroes and Arabic philosophy within their own cultural heritage? How different was their perception of Averroes from the actual Ibn Rushd, the theologian, jurist and philosopher of the Islamic tradition? In this chapter, I will try to answer these questions by focusing on Kant and the philosophy of the German Enlightenment. It may seem odd to devote a chapter to ascertaining the nature of Kant's 'Averroism', for it is highly likely that he had only a smattering of knowledge concerning Averroes's philosophy. However, it may thus come as a surprise that one of the most important philosophers

[1] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6, 268–269: 'They walked through the dark, in the desolate night populated by shades, along the lifeless regions where Pluto reigns.' Quoted by Kant in his *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1900-), II, p. 329.

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of the Enlightenment and, indeed, a former pupil of Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), characterised Kant's critical philosophy as a form of Averroism.[2]

In the past two decades, three authors have investigated possible relationships between Kant and the Averroistic tradition. The first, in an essay entitled 'El "averroismo" en la filosofia moral de Kant', published in 1992, is Fernando Montero Moliner. In 1996, Alparslan Açikgenç wrote on 'Ibn Rushd, Kant and Trascendent Rationality.' Finally, the most recent article on the topic is 'Wandering in the Path of the Averroean System: Is Kant's Doctrine on the *Bewusstsein Überhaupt* Averroistic?' by Philipp W. Rosemann and published in 1999.[3] By characterising Kant's philosophy as Averroistic, Moliner intends to refer to the distinctively Kantian emphasis on universal values in ethical philosophy and the ensuing effacement of the role of the individual in human action. For Kant, universality is the necessary condition of morality, while individual motivations, including happiness, are as a result incompatible with a true ethical behaviour. It seems therefore that there is no room in this view for the value of individual human experience in the field of moral philosophy.[4] Açikgenç's approach is a comparative analysis of Averroes's and Kant's views of rationality, with particular emphasis on the question of the difference between subjective and objective knowledge. Rosemann discusses the nature of the faculties and operations of the soul in Averroes's *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros* and in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. His conclusion is that Kant 'could be considered an Averroist, in the sense of being a philosopher whose thought exhibits analogies with the Averroean theory of the agent intellect.'[5]

Other scholars had already dealt in a cursory manner with the question of the possible presence of Averroistic motifs in Kant's philosophy. Ernest Renan was the first, in his *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (1852), to put forward an interpretation of the Averroistic system from a critical point of view. He pointed out how Ibn Rushd's

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[2] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan, 33 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–1899), XIII, pp. 345–346. For a reconstruction of the principal phases in the Herder-Kant controversy over the meaning of history, see: Rudolf Haym, *Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken dargestellt*, 2 vols (Berlin: Gärtner, 1880–1885), II, pp. 247–262; Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Nijhoff, [1963] 1969), p. 114, n. 2; Allen W. Wood, 'Translator's Introduction', in Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 121–123.

[3] See Fernando Montero Moliner, 'El "averroismo" en la filosofía moral de Kant', *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía*, 9 (1992), pp. 39–58; Alparslan Açikgenç, 'Ibn Rushd, Kant and Transcendent Rationality: A Critical Synthesis', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 16 (1996), pp. 164–190; Philipp W. Rosemann, 'Wandering in the Path of the Averroean System: Is Kant's Doctrine on the *Bewusstsein Überhaupt* Averroistic?', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 73 (1999), pp. 185–230.

[4] Moliner, 'El "averroismo" en la filosofía moral de Kant', p. 39.

[5] Rosemann, 'Wandering in the Path of the Averroean System', pp. 229–230.

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notion of the 'unity of the intellect' meant nothing but 'the universality of the principles of pure reason and the unity of the psychological constitution of the entire human species.'[6] In the field of Kantian studies, the first scholar who noticed the existence of strong similarities between Averroes's rationalism and Kant's criticism was Carl du Prel, in his 'Kants mystische Weltanschauung' published in 1889. Du Prel wrote his essay as an introduction to the *Vorlesungen über Psychologie*, part of Kant's lectures that had been edited by Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölitz in 1821 under the title *Vorlesungen über Metaphysik*. In Du Perl's opinion, Kant had maintained the existence of one transcendental subject and each individual human subject could merely be seen as its manifestation in the world. This partial immersion of the transcendental subject in the world represented the reason for the unknowability of the noumena. In addition, Du Prel advocated the pre-existence of the individual in the transcendental subject, its incarnation in a sensible body and its return to the original subject after death. In this view, universal morality, expressed by categorical imperatives, would be the voice of the noumenic subject. In opposition to Du Prel's theses, Heinz Heimsoeth published in 1924 an article on the relationship between personal awareness and the unknowable 'thing-in-itself' in Kant's philosophy ('Persönlichkeitsbewußtsein und Ding an sich in der Kantischen Philosophie'). Heimsoeth ruled out the possibility that Kant's transcendentalism could be interpreted in Averroistic terms. He acknowledged, however, the existence of an irresolvable tension lingering in Kant's ethical philosophy between the scholastic thesis of the individual immortality of the soul and the Averroistic doctrine of the unity of the mind in all human beings.[7] More recently, in an article on Averroes's view concerning the immortality of humankind ('Averroes über die Unsterblichkeit des Menschengeschlechtes'), Philip Merlan confirmed Herder's original thesis that a form of Averroism can be traced in Kant's moral philosophy. In his 1960 article, Merlan concluded that Herder was right 'when he saw an Averroist in Kant.'[8] In 1963, in his book *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*, Merlan devoted an entire chapter to demonstrating, not always convincingly, that Kant's philosophy was compatible with Averroism. To the list of modern philosophers who could be interpreted in the light of Averroism, he added Wilhelm Windelband, Edmund Husserl, Georg Simmel and Erwin Schroedinger.[9] Finally, it is worth mentioning

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[6] Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Henriette Psichari, 10 vols (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947–1961), III, p. 117.

[7] Heinz Heimsoeth, 'Persönlichkeitsbewußtsein und Ding an sich in der Kantischen Philosophie', in Id., *Studien zur Philosophie Immanuel Kants*, ed. H. Heimsoeth (Bonn: Bouvier, 1971), pp. 227–257. See also Rosemann, 'Wandering in the Path of the Averroean System', p. 187.

[8] Philip Merlan, 'Averroes über die Unsterblichkeit des Menschengeschlechtes', in *L'homme et son destin d'après les penseurs du Moyen Âge* (Louvain and Paris: Nauwelaerts and Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1960), pp. 305–311 (310). See also Rosemann, 'Wandering in the Path of the Averroean System', p. 188.

[9] Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*, pp. 114–137.

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that in issue 16 of the journal *Alif*, published in 1996 and dedicated to Averroes and his legacy in the East and West, at least three articles focus on German philosophy and the Enlightenment.[10]

All these studies are based on generic comparisons between Kant and Averroes. The aim of this chapter is to determine the nature and extent of Kant's actual knowledge of Averroes. To this purpose, it is important to establish what Kant could have known of Averroes's philosophy and to understand what Herder's motivations were in charging Kant with Averroism. My aim, in the rest of this chapter, is to reconstruct the debate over Averroistic doctrines in the German Enlightenment and to draw attention to the sources that were available to Kant at the time. Investigating the Averroistic tradition, or traces of Averroism in the Enlightenment also implies a confrontation with such sweeping philosophical themes as 'monopsychism' and Spinozism. To limit the scope of my investigation, I will focus on the following questions: the mind-body relationship, the immortality of the soul and the oneness of the mind.

Averroism in German Eclecticism, in the Leibnizian-Wolffian School, and in the Aristotelian Tradition

Averroistic Aristotelianism was never as widespread in Germany as it was in Italy. In German universities, whether Catholic or Protestant, Averroes was not studied in a systematic manner. Editions of Aristotle containing Averroes's commentaries – the Giuntine, for example – had a scarce circulation. Initially, the lack of circulation was probably due to a certain hostility towards Aristotle on the part of Protestant philosophers and to their preference for the writings of Philipp Melanchthon, who had never mentioned Averroes in his *Liber de anima*. Moreover, the bilingual Latin-Greek edition by Giulio Pace and Isaac Casaubon was preferred to the Giuntine edition for its exegetic and philological interpretation.[11]

Averroes was not, however, completely unknown to German philosophers and teachers of philosophy. Averroistic doctrines circulated with the dissemination of works by Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), but they were met with strong oppositions. A significant case is Nikolaus Taurellus (1547–1606), the most important German Aristotelian of his time, who criticised the doctrine of the double truth and of the oneness of the mind in his *Philosophiae triumphus*.[12] Indeed, almost all seventeenth-century German Aristotelians embraced the doctrine of the individual immortality of the soul and rejected the theory of the unicity of the intellect.

[10] Charles Butterworth, 'Averroes, Precursor of the Enlightenment?', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 16 (1996), pp. 6–18; Harold Stone, 'Why Europeans Stopped Reading Averroës: The Case of Pierre Bayle', ibid., pp. 77–95; Ernest Wolf-Gazo, 'Contextualizing Averroës within the German Hermeneutic Tradition', ibid., pp. 133–163.

[11] Stone, 'Why Europeans Stopped Reading Averroës', p. 78.

[12] See Peter Petersen, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie im protestantischen Deutschland* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1921), p. 256.

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Attitudes were much the same at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The period from 1690 to 1720 was characterised in Germany by a renewal of philosophical culture, the most important philosophical events of the time being the growing fame of G.W. Leibniz (1646–1716), the popularity of Christian Thomasius's philosophy, the development of a distinctively German tradition of eclecticism, the increasing influence of Pietism and the emerging of Christian Wolff (1679–1754) as a leading figure in the field of academic philosophy. Philosophers were strongly influenced by religious topics and, as a result, Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition (including Averroism) became the favourite targets of philosophical criticism. Aristotelians and Averroists were portrayed as typical products of intellectual hubris, in no need of religious revelation and confident in the power of 'unaided' reason. Not only were Aristotelianism and Averroism deemed to be wrong from an intellectual point of view; they were also regarded as perilous sources of atheistic and heretical views.[13] As shown by Harold Stone, this trend was inaugurated by Pierre Bayle's entry in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697, 1702), a text would turn out to be one of 'the unwitting causes of Averroes's disappearance as a major philosophic influence.' The problem was that 'Bayle left his eighteenth-century readers dubious of the value of philosophic speculation and uncertain about how revelation could provide a basis for rationality.'[14]

In this context, Averroism and all doctrines related to it were considered impious and atheist by the proponents of the eclectic movement. The most famous representative of German eclecticism was without doubt Johann Franz Budde (1697–1702), who not only proposed a general renewal of scholastic philosophy and the rejection of all syncretistic solutions, but was also the first to be seriously and systematically involved with the writing of history of philosophy.[15] In his historical works he dealt with Averroism within the Aristotelian tradition and accused both of atheism. Emanuele Coccia has already identified the most important passage that Budde addressed against Averroes in his *Theses theologicae de atheismo et superstitione*, published in 1716:

> Averroes's opinion (one should say Aristotle's opinion) admits only one mind – numerically one – in the world, to the point that there would be only one soul in all human beings, is no longer reasonable. How can we conceive of one mind alone in all human beings, without any extension? From such an idea one would infer that this mind is material … And since human beings have not only different but often contrary thoughts in their minds, one should say that the same mind would contradict itself at the same time and in the same human being … What can be more ridiculous?[16]

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[13] Mario Longo, 'The History of Philosophy from Eclecticism to Pietism', in *Models of the History of Philosophy*, *II: From the Cartesian Age to Brucker*, ed. Gregorio Paia and Giovanni Santinello (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 301–386 (307).

[14] Stone, 'Why Europeans Stopped Reading Averroës', p. 87.

[15] Longo, 'The History of Philosophy from Eclecticism to Pietism', pp. 343–372.

[16] **Johann Franz Budde, *Traité de l'athéisme et de la superstition*, trans. L. Philon (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1740). See also Id., *Theses theologicae de atheismo et superstitione* (Leiden: Johannes Le Mair, 1767), p. 153: 'Quantumvis autem impia pariter ac inepta sit haec sententia [i.e.: unam numero mentem seu unum intellectum, non per singulos divisum, sed communem omnibus inesse], tanta tamen olim Averrois fuit auctoritas, ut plurimi viri docti in eam ingredirentur, praesertim in Italia.' See Emanuele Coccia, *La trasparenza delle immagini: Averroè e l'averroismo* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2005), pp. 24–25.**

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In the *Analecta historiae philosophicae*, published originally in 1706, Budde took on an influential and original historiographical approach towards Averroism that was very popular until the end of the eighteenth century. He looked at Averroism as a form of Spinozism before Spinoza. In Budde's view, Averroism is in good company with all the Aristotelians, the Eleatics, David of Dinant, Renaissance Neo-Platonists, Andrea Cesalpino and the Neo-Stoics.[17] Budde's reconstructions and judgments greatly influenced the perception of Averroism in Germany until the end of the Enlightenment and, as a result, Averroism tended to become synonymous with Spinozism.

The charges of atheism levelled at Averroism by Johann Joachim Lange (1670–1744), a student of Budde in Halle, were more specific. In his treatise on the origin of God and natural religion against the claims of atheism (*Caussa Dei et religionis naturalis adversus atheismum*), he criticised Aristotle and the schoolmen, especially the interpreters of natural philosophy, for the atheistic implications of their doctrines. Lange was particularly severe against Aristotle's theory of the eternity of the world and his denial of divine providence.[18] In his opinion, the mistakes of Averroists and Aristotelians could all be reduced to two: the eternity of the world and the unicity of the intellect for all human beings. Lange devoted the 'Proposition' 11 of the first part of his treatise ('Protheoria') to an examination of the process through which Italy, in spite of being a centre for studies during the fifteenth century, turned out to be a 'factory of atheism' (*atheismi officina*) as a result of its cultural subjection to scholastic Aristotelianism (*subserviente philosophia Aristotelica*) and subsequently spread the 'infection' to the rest of Europe.[19] Among the Averroists and atheists, Lange included David of Dinant, Girolamo Cardano, Pietro Pomponazzi, Andrea Cesalpino, Cesare Cremonini and Giordano Bruno.[20] Lange extended his charges of Averroism, Spinozism and fatalisms to an emergent philosophical trend at the time, the Wolffian school of philosophy.[21]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the followers of Wolff reacted against the eclectic movement. To be sure, Christian Wolff was no Averroist. His views were derived from Leibniz's philosophy, which contained various criticisms of

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[17] Johann Franz Budde, *Analecta historiae philosophicae* (Halle: Orphanotrophii, 1724), pp. 309–359.

[18] Johann Joachim Lange, *Caussa Dei et religionis naturalis adversus atheismum* (Halle: Orphanotrophii, 1723), pp. 32–36, 129–143.

[19] Ibid., p. 70: 'Quemadmodum Italia, renascentibus seculo XV. Et deinceps litteris, litteratorum sedes fuit praecipua: sic subserviente philosophia Aristotelica etiam atheismi officina facta est; Gallia tamen ac Anglia aliisque regionibus eadem labe ex parte infectis.'

[20] Ibid., pp. 71–75.

[21] Ibid, pp. 16–17: 'Sic dicti *Idealistae* sunt, qui statuunt, nihil existere, nisi spiritus materiae expertes, seu *simplicia*, quae aliis etiam *monades* vocantur. Et cum simplicium suorum naturam in ideisatione (ut ita loquar) seu *perceptione ideali* collocent, mundum materialem et ejus corpora habent pro ideis simplicium, seu pro lusu imaginationis, qualis est in somnio, ordinato tamen.' See ibid., pp. 49, 64.

Editor's Proof

Averroes's philosophy and of the Aristotelian tradition. In the 'Preliminary Dissertation on the Conformity of Faith with Reason' of his *Theodicy* (1710), Leibniz had referred to a sect of early modern Italian philosophers opposed to the 'conformity of faith with reason' thesis advocated by him. 'They were dubbed "Averroists",'

> because they were adherents of a famous Arab author, who was called the Commentator by pre-eminence, and who appeared to be the one of all his race that penetrated furthest into Aristotle's meaning. This Commentator, extending what Greek expositors had already taught, maintained that, according to Aristotle, and even according to reason (and at that time the two were considered almost identical), there was no case for the immortality of the soul.[22]

[AU2]

Leibniz examined the reasoning that, in his opinion, had brought about the Averroistic heresy among Italian philosophers during the Renaissance in the following manner:[23]

> The human kind is eternal, according to Aristotle; therefore, if individual souls die not, one must resort to the metempsychosis rejected by that philosopher. Or, if there are always new souls, one must admit the infinity of these souls existing from all eternity; but actual infinity is impossible, according to the doctrine of the same Aristotle. Therefore it is a necessary conclusion that the souls, that is, the forms of organic bodies, must perish with the bodies, or at least this must happen to the passive understanding that belongs to each one individually. Thus there will only remain the active understanding common to all men, which according to Aristotle comes from outside, and which must work wheresoever the organs are suitably disposed; even as the wind produces a kind of music when it is blown into properly adjusted organ pipes.[24]

Leibniz further added that

> others who adhered less to Aristotle went so far as to advocate a universal soul forming the ocean of all individual souls, and believed this universal soul alone capable of subsisting, whilst individual souls are born and die. According to this opinion the souls of animals are born by being separated like drops from their ocean, when they find a body, which they can animate; and they die by being reunited to the ocean of souls when the body is destroyed, as streams are lost in the sea. Many even went so far as to believe that God is that universal soul, although others thought that this soul was subordinate and created.[25]

Leibniz called the supporters of this philosophical doctrine 'monopsychites', and pointed out that such an opinion was 'almost universally accepted amongst scholars in Persia and in the States of the Grand Mogul.' This view had then been resumed

Uncorrected Proof

[22] G. W. Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée sur la bonté de dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. J. Gerhardt, 7 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885; repr. Hildesheim: Olms 1960–1961), VI, p. 53; *Theodicy*, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), pp. 77–78.

[23] It may be worth pointing out that Leibniz's argument is strikingly similar to the one advanced by Girolamo Cardano in his *De immortalitate animorum* (1545). See José Manuel Valverde's chapter in this volume.

[24] Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 53; *Theodicy*, pp. 77–78.

[25] Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 54; *Theodicy*, p. 78.

Editor's Proof

by Spinoza, who, Leibniz continued, 'recognises only one substance in the world, whereof individual souls are but transient modifications.'[26] Worse than the Averroistic position was for Leibniz that held by the Buddhists, who reduced everything to nothingness, considered to be the source of all things.[27] At least, thought Leibniz, the Averroists maintained that everything was bound to fade away into one active mind. Among the Averroists, Leibniz included Pietro Pomponazzi, Cesare Cremonini and Andrea Cesalpino. He then detected traces of Averroism in Claude Guillermet de Bérigard and Gabriel Naudé. The *Naudaeana,* in particular, showed that Averroism was alive and well in Italy at that time.[28]

In Leibniz's opinion, the Averroistic doctrines were indefensible and even extravagant. He believed that his system of pre-established harmony would be the best cure for this evil:

> For it shows that there are necessarily simple substances without extension, scattered throughout all Nature; that these substances must exist independently except from God; and that they are never separated from organic body. Those who believe that souls capable of feeling, but incapable of reason are mortal, or who maintain that none but reasoning souls can have feeling, Christians in general and Cartesians in particular, offer a handle to the Monopsychites and to Averroists.[29]

To strengthen his demonstration, Leibniz added a well-known argument concerning the soul of animals, for 'it will ever be difficult to persuade men that beasts feel nothing; and once the admission has been made that that which is capable of feeling can die, it is difficult to found upon reason a proof of the immortality of our souls.'[30]

In the tradition of Wolffian philosophy – the kind of philosophy which shaped Kant's philosophical apprenticeship –, Averroism played a relevant role in the discussion of such themes as pre-established harmony, the relationship between the mind and the body and the immortality of the soul. Indeed, Wolffian philosophers paid more attention to Averroistic and monopsychistic themes than the eclectic philosophers ever did. In keeping with the principles of Wolff's metaphysics, a number of philosophers believed that the thorniest questions in Averroes's philosophy would disappear once the mind had been identified with the monad and its immortality accepted. This was the opinion advocated by Johann Peter Reusch (1691–1758), Friedrich Christian Baumeister (1709–1785), Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (1693–1750) and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762), among others, whose works were read and commented upon by Kant in his lectures.

To complete this reconstruction of the reception of Averroism in the cultural milieu prior to Kant, it is necessary to refer briefly to the most important philosophical current in Königsberg until the first two decades of the eighteenth century in Königsberg, the so-called 'pure Aristotelianism'. The movement of 'pure

Uncorrected Proof

[26] Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 55; *Theodicy*, p. 79.

[27] Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 56; *Theodicy*, p. 80.

[28] Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 57; *Theodicy*, p. 81.

[29] Leibniz, *Essais de theodicée*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 56; *Theodicy*, p. 80.

[30] Ibid. See also Leibniz, *Considerations sur la doctrine d'un Esprit Universal Unique*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, VI, p. 529–538 (529).

Editor's Proof

Aristotelianism' had originated in Padua from the Alexandrinistic interpretation of Aristotle and became very popular in German universities thanks the works of Jacopo Zabarella (1532–1589) and Giulio Pace (1550–1631), who had been acquainted with the Averroistic reading of Aristotle. Averroistic doctrines were discussed in particular in the course of lectures on natural philosophy, every time the question of the origin and immortality of human soul was raised. Paul Rabe (1656–1713), the last significant Aristotelian of Königsberg, tried to make sense of the most characteristic Averroistic positions in his *Cursus philosophicus* (1704), a comprehensive companion to Aristotelian philosophy. In his opinion, the passive or material intellect was not the same as the human soul and, like the active intellect, it could be separated from the body.[31] However, since only the active intellect existed separately as immortal and eternal, the possibility of interpreting the passive and active intellect as one substance remained open. While the universal principles of knowledge were the potential object of the passive intellect, the active intellect represented the eternal actualisation of those principles.[32] In spite of Rabe's lingering interest in the Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle, it is safe to say that Königsberg Aristotelianism had long moved away from Averroes.

Was Kant an Averroist?

The influence of Leibniz and Wolff on Kant's perception of Averroism are particularly evident in his lectures on metaphysics based on Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* (1739). Baumgarten addressed the question of the origin of the human soul and its immortality in the section dedicated to rational psychology, as it was usual in the Wolffian school. Eight different versions of Kant's lectures on metaphysics exist spanning from the early 1760s to the late 1790s. One might say that, for more than 30 years, Kant was exposed to the question of Averroism in his lectures, even if only indirectly. One of the versions of the lectures, the oldest one dated 1762–1764, is of particular interest here because it was transcribed by Herder, who 20 years later would accuse Kant of Averroism.[33] The origins of this accusation can probably be traced back to these lectures.

Uncorrected Proof

[31] Paul Rabe, *Cursus philosophicus, seu compendium praecipuarum scientiarum philosophicarum* (Königsberg: Boye, 1703), p. 1141. On Rabe, see Riccardo Pozzo, 'Tracce zabarelliane nella logica kantiana', *Fenomenologia e Società*, 18 (1995), pp. 58–69; Id., 'Kant on the Five Intellectual Virtues', in *The Impact of Aristotelianism on Modern Philosophy*, ed. Riccardo Pozzo (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 173–192 (pp. 181–186); Id., 'L'ontologia nei manuali di metafisica della *Aufklärung*', *Quaestio*, 9 (2009), pp. 285–301; Marco Sgarbi, 'Kant, Rabe e la logica aristotelica', *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*, 64 (2009), pp. 269–293; Id., 'Metaphysics in Königsberg Prior to Kant (1703–1770)', *Trans/Form/Ação*, 33 (2010), pp. 31–64; Id., *Logica e metafisica nel Kant precritico: L'ambiente intellettuale di Königsberg e la formazione della filosofia kantiana* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010); Id. *La* Kritik der reinen Vernunft *nel contesto della tradizione logica aristotelica* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2010).

[32] Rabe, *Cursus philosophicus*, p. 1142.

[33] See Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik Herder*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, XXVIII, pp. 3–166.

Editor's Proof

All the lectures on metaphysics are more or less the same, even Kant progressively added his own personal thoughts on Baumgarten's book. The most significant courses of metaphysics are the *Metaphysik Mrongovius* and the *Metaphysik Volckmann,* datable around 1782 and 1784. It is a recurrent feature that the final chapter of the lectures deals with the problem of the immortality of the soul. In Mrongovius's transcription, the chapter begins with the following questions: 'Will the soul continue to live? 1. Will it continue as a human being (*Mensch*) or as an intelligence (*Intelligenz*)? 2. Does this survival derive from the constitution of its nature (and therefore it is truly immortal), or from a special divine decree? 3. Will this survival be general or particular?'[34] Each of these questions provides evidence to determine whether Kant can be characterised as an Averroist. The answers remained the same for the 30 years during which he lectured on metaphysics. In his rational psychology, Kant demonstrated the persistence of the soul as substance, its survival after death as intelligence and its survival as a person.[35] The soul of human beings survives as an intelligence to preserve the foundations of ethical life. The survival of the human beings concerns the individual and not the species, even if the condition of the soul before its birth was devoid of self-consciousness and consciousness of the world. As such, the soul lacks identity and is part of the *corpus mysticum*, i.e., the intelligible world.[36] Thus it would appear that, according to Kant, before their birth, minds are part of a universal intellect, and after their birth, they become separated from the others. If so, one might say that Kant's Averroism would be *a parte ante* and not *a parte post*. And yet Herder accused Kant of being a fully-fledged Averroist.[37] Can we say that a blatant form of misunderstanding lies behind such a charge?

In 1766, some years after Herder's transcription, Kant published a fascinating essay, the *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*. In this text, which deals with the relationship between the sensible and the intelligible world, Kant set out to explain the allegedly supernatural experiences of Emanuel Swedenborg, who claimed to be able to talk with immaterial spirits. Although he declared himself unable to describe them, Kant acknowledged the existence of immaterial beings in the world. '[I]mmediately united with each other,' he argued, 'they might form, perhaps, a great whole which might be called the immaterial world (*mundus intellegibilis*),' ruled by spiritual laws (*Wirkungsgesetze pneumatisch*).[38] This immaterial world, Kant went on to say, 'can be regarded as a whole existing by itself.'[39] He then specified the key feature of this world: it 'would primarily

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[34] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, XXIX, p. 910.

[35] Kant, *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, p. 912.

[36] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik L1*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, XXVIII, p. 284.

[37] Laura Anna Macor, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen (1748–1800). Eine Begriffsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, forthcoming), § 34.b.

[38] Immanuel Kant, *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* in *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, p. 329; *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, ed. Frank Sewall, trans. E. F. Goerwitz (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992), p. 56.

[39] Ibid., p. 330 [trans., p. 56].

Editor's Proof

comprise all created intelligences. Some of these are combined with matter, thus forming a person, and some not.'[40] The intelligible world, or *corpus mysticum*, would then be the whole body of intelligences. In the *Träume eines Geistersehers*, Kant maintained that the human mind was the only one to possess a real intelligence already in its sensible life, and, for this reason, we should regard

> the human soul as being conjoined in its present life with two worlds at the same time, of which it clearly perceives only the material world, in so far as it is conjoined with a body, and thus forms a personal unit. But, as a member of the spiritual world, it receives and gives out the pure influences of immaterial natures.[41]

Kant added that,

> [a]mong the forces which move the human heart, some of the most powerful seem to lie outside of it. They consequently are not mere means to selfishness and private interest, which would be an aim lying inside of man himself, but they incline our emotions to place the focus in which they combine outside of us, in other rational beings.[42]

For Kant, these forces promote the tendency to compare our judgment on what is good or true with the judgment of others, combining such opinions into a harmonious whole. For Kant, this was the proof that our own judgment depends upon 'the common human understanding (*allgemeinen menschlichen Verstande*), and it becomes a reason for ascribing to the whole of thinking beings (*dem Ganzen denkender Wesen*) a sort of unity of reason (*eine Art von Vernunfteinheit*).'[43] This theory of universal human understanding produced in turn the rule of the general will, which confers upon the world of all thinking beings 'a *moral unity*, and a systematic constitution according to purely spiritual laws.'[44] Kant emphasised the unity of all minds in one universal mind (the *Geisterwelt*) and regarded it as the foundation of morality. In his opinion, the rule of the general will and the common human understanding could be compared to some sort of Newtonian law of gravity.[45] In all likelihood, when writing the *Träume eines Geistersehers*, Kant had been influenced by the ideas of the English moralists Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686–1743) and George Cheyne (1673–1743), who believed in the existence of a moral 'gravity.'[46] Through the years, Kant changed his mind and developed a formal theory of a moral universal which was first formulated in the 1784 pamphlet *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* ('Idea for a Universal History with a

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[40] Ibid., p. 332 [trans., p. 59].

[41] Ibid., p. 332 [trans., p. 60].

[42] Ibid., p. 334 [trans., p. 62].

[43] Ibid. [trans., p. 63 (with slight change to Goerwitz's translation)].

[44] Ibid., p. 335 [trans., p. 64].

[45] Ibid., pp. 335–336 [trans., pp. 65–66].

[46] See Giorgio Tonelli, 'Kant's Ethics as a Part of Metaphysics: A Possible Newtonian Suggestion? With Some Comments on Kant's "Dream of a Seer"', in *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts: Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider*, ed. Craig Walton and John Peter Anton (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1974), pp. 236–263.

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Cosmopolitan Aim'), precisely the work that would trigger Herder's critical response concerning the alleged presence of Averroistic themes in Kant's philosophy. Herder's discussion in *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* is particularly intriguing and is worth reporting in full:

> We can speak, therefore, of an education of mankind. Every individual only becomes man by means of education, and the whole species lives solely as this chain of individuals. To be sure, if anyone [*Herder is referring here to Kant*], in speaking of the education of mankind, should mean the education of the species as a whole and not that of so many individuals comprising it, he would be wholly unintelligible to me. For 'species' and 'genus' are merely abstract concepts, empty sounds, unless they refer to individual beings. Thus, if I were to attribute to such abstract concepts every perfection, culture and enlightenment of which man is capable, I should contribute to the actual history of man no more than if I were to speak of animalkind, stonekind and metalkind, and decorate them with all the noblest qualities which, if they really existed, in any one single individual or entity, would cancel each other out. Our philosophy of history shall not pursue the path of the Averroan system, according to which the whole human species possess but one mind (and that of a low order), which is distributed to individuals only piecemeal.[47]

Kant replied to these criticisms in the review of Herder's *Ideen* he published in 1785 in the *Allgemeine Litteraturzeitung*. Kant argued ironically that if Herder were right, then an exponent of such philosophy (i.e., Averroistic philosophy) would be an 'evil' man.[48] He then defended himself by stating that

> If 'the human species' signifies the whole of a series of generations going (indeterminably) into the infinite (as this meaning is entirely customary), and it is assumed that this series ceaselessly approximates the line of its destiny running alongside it, then it is not to utter a contradiction to say that in all its parts it is asymptotic to this line and yet on the whole that it will coincide with it, in other words, that no member of all the generations of humankind, but only the species will fully reach its destiny.[49]

Kant was annoyed less by Herder's misunderstanding of his thought than by his being accused of Averroism. Kant characterised the misunderstanding as 'a trifle'. More important for him was the fact that Herder seemed to be an author 'to whom everything that has been given out previously as philosophy has often been so displeasing.'[50]

But what might Kant have said in his writing of 1784? Could Herder's charge have derived from reading the *Träume eines Geistersehers*? In the *Idee*, Kant maintained that individuals, even whole nations, when following their purposes, proceed

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[47] Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, pp. 345–346; trans. F. M. Barnard, in *Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 312.

[48] Immanuel Kant, 'Recensionen von J. G. Herders *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Theil 1.2.', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, p. 65; 'Review of J. G. Herder's *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*. Parts 1 and 2', trans. Allen W. Wood, in Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 142.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

Editor's Proof

unconsciously towards a natural goal.[51] Human beings need countless series of generations, each of which passes its own 'enlightenment' to its successor in order finally to bring the seeds of 'enlightenment' to complete fulfilment in a humankind which is completely consonant with nature's purpose.[52] In the human being (as the only rational creature on earth) the natural dispositions that are directed to the use of reason are to be fully developed in the kind, not in the individual.[53] It is therefore safe to say that Kant elaborated a philosophical view according to which human reason in its universality cannot be developed in the individual, but only in the species. The history of human beings should become the history of humankind, namely the history of universal reason in its making. Here it is important to stress the conditional tense, for Kant is aware that universal reason is simply a hypothetical condition in order for the human beings to act morally. There is no really existing universal mind or reason for Kant.

Kant's non-Averroism is apparent in his later views on ethics in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* ('Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals'), published in 1785. Of the eight formulations of the moral law, the so-called 'formula of humanity as an end in itself' reveals traces of Averroistic thought. The formula states that one should act in such a way that humanity, whether in one's own person or in the person of any other, be always treated as an end in itself, and never as a means to an end.[54] Allen Wood has reconstructed the logical steps underlying the inference. The ground of the moral principle is the principle according to which rational nature exists as an end in itself – this is how human beings necessarily represent their own existence. Each rational being, however, also represents his or her existence by relying on precisely the same rational ground which is valid for another; therefore, this rational ground works as an objective principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be derived. Kant's famous practical imperative – to use humanity always as an end, never as a means – revolves around this notion of humanity as the embodiment of universal reason.[55]

Kant champions the existence of a universal reason according to which human beings must act 'as if' this universal reason is the reason of every individual human being who decides to act. Universal rationality, insofar as it represents humankind, would therefore be in the individual and would be the source of its actions. As a categorical imperative, it is a universal rule and is therefore not constitutive for the individual. Universal rationality is an end towards which we must tend if we want to act in a moral way, but not an actual object existing in reality. As a result, Kantian

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[51] Immanuel Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, pp. 17–31; *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, trans. Allen W. Wood, pp. 108–120.

[52] Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte*, p. 17; *Idea for a Universal History*, pp. 108–109.

[53] Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte*, pp. 18–19; *Idea for a Universal History*, pp. 109–110.

[54] Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, p. 429.

[55] Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 124–125.

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Averroism, if it can indeed be called Averroism, is only hypothetical and regulative. It is precisely along these lines that Moliner developed his reflections on Kant's Averroism in moral philosophy.

Herder was not the only one to charge Kant with Averroism. Merlan has already noticed that in 1797 Karl Arnold Wilmans, a student of medicine in Halle, wrote a dissertation entitled *De similitudine inter mysticismum purum et Kantianam religionis doctrinam* ('On the Similarity between Pure Mysticism and the Kant's Religious Doctrine'), according to which Kantian doctrines bore a strong resemblance to Averroism and mysticism.[56] Wilmans supported the idea that Kant was close to the Averroistic doctrine because in his moral thought human beings, once separated from their bodies, share their minds with the rest of humankind. Wilmans's dissertation would have been just one of the many dissertations of the time on Kant's religious thought, if Kant himself had not included a letter of Wilmans as an appendix to his *Der Streit der Fakultäten* ('The Conflict of the Faculties').[57] Having in mind Herder's criticisms, Kant understood Wilmans position, but disagreed with him nonetheless, stating that he did not want agree with him 'entirely'.[58] The word 'entirely' is extremely significant, because it means that in a broader sense Kant agreed with Wilmans. Wilmans wrote a letter to Kant on 20 January 1798. We know part of the content of this letter from Kant's reply of on 4 May 1799.[59] Here Kant made clear that he could not accept the distinction between the materiality of the understanding (*Verstand*) and the immateriality of reason (*Vernunft*), a distinction that Wilmans had presented as characteristic of the Kantian philosophy. Kant rejected the charge that his philosophical system created a rift within the subject between the understanding (governing the process of organizing the multiplicity of representations) and reason (in charge of transforming the unity of the experience into a consciousness). It is evident that Wilmans's charge was that of Averroism, i.e., of assuming a real distinction between a material singular understanding for each individual and a universal reason for the whole of humankind.[60] Kant rejected Wilmans's interpretation, but he did not provide any further explanation. In the meantime, Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann (1767–1843), a student of Kant, replied to the accusations of Averroism and mysticism in his book *Prüfung der Kantischen Religionsphilosophie in Hinsicht auf die ihr beygelegte Aehnlichkeit mit dem reinen Mystizism* ('Examination of Kant's Philosophy of Religion with Respect to the Alleged Similarity to Pure Mysticism'), published in 1800. Since Kant wrote the preface

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[56] Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*, p. 131.

[57] Karl Arnold Wilmans, 'Anhang von einer reinen Mystik in der Religion', in Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII, pp. 69–75.

[58] Immanuel Kant, *Der Streit der philosophischen Facultät mit der theologischen*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII, p. 69.

[59] Immanuel Kant to Karl Arnold Wilmans, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, XII, pp. 281–282.

[60] Ibid., p. 282.

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to Jachmann's book, one might assume that he was in agreement with his former student in rejecting possible Averroistic and mystical interpretations of his philosophy.[61]

One might therefore conclude that, while Kant was no Averroen (and certainly no Averroist), his philosophy, nevertheless, lent itself to possible Averroist interpretations. One might wonder why other philosophers at the time like Schelling or Hegel have never been directly charged with Averroism. One possible reason may lie in the contemporary perception of Kant as a representative of the Enlightenment. Considered from this philosophical point of view, the doctrine of the equality of all human beings based on the universal scope of their reasons could no longer be taken as a form of Averroism.

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[61] Immanuel Kant, 'Vorrede' to Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann's *Prüfung der Kantischen Religionsphilosophie*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 8, p. 441.

Editor's Proof

Author Queries

Chapter No.: 13 0001629574

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Please confirm the affiliation of the author "Marco Sgarbi."	
AU2	Please provide the opening parenthesis of the sentence "trans. E. M. Huggard, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985)…"	

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Part III
Averroism and Modernity

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Chapter 14
Ernest Renan and Averroism: The Story of a Misinterpretation

John Marenbon

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Ernest Renan described Averroism as 'the story of an enormous misinterpretation.' There is, then, some poetic justice in the fact that his own book on the subject, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, has itself been misunderstood. Renan specialists in general, give it no more than a passing mention, because it was written as a thesis and falls outside the field where he made his name, Old and New Testament history.[1] Henriette Psichari, the editor of Renan's collected works (and his grandson's sister-in-law), does not even think the book worth a mention.[2] There is one exception: Jules Chaix-Ruy has looked in detail at how Renan collected the sources for Averroism, and at his correspondence about the subject.[3] But the links he draws between this book and Renan's later work, though interesting, are very different

[1] For example, Charles Chauvin, *Renan (1823–1892)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000) 4 lines on *Averroès et l'averroïsme* [*AA*] (p. 35); Henri Peyre, *Renan* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969) 2 lines on *AA* (p. 14); Harold W. Wardman, *Ernest Renan: A Critical Biography* (London: Athlone Press, 1964) 3 lines on *AA* (p. 62); François Millepierres, *La Vie d'Ernest Renan, sage d'Occident* (Paris; Rivière, 1961) 3 lines on *AA* (p. 199); Johannes Tielroy, *Ernest Renan, sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1958) *AA* not mentioned; Lewis F. Mott, *Ernest Renan* (London: Appleby, 1923) 3 lines on *AA*, emphasizing the cost of printing it; Jean Pommier (*Renan d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Perrin, 1923) dedicates a paragraph to *AA* (pp. 94–95), where he finds links with Renan's crisis of faith, his trip to Italy and the play, *Caliban*, which he went on to write).

[2] Henriette Psichari, *Renan d'après lui-même* (Paris: Plon, 1937).

[3] Jules Chaix-Ruy, '"L'Avverroès" d'Ernest Renan', *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales*, 8 (1949–50), pp. 5–60; *Ernest Renan* (Paris: Vitte, 1956), pp. 152–179. Chaix-Ruy concentrates on themes in Averroes's philosophy that Renan, he believes, adopted into his own thought, and on Renan's view that the story of Islamic civilization shows what happens when religious faith succeeds finally in stifling philosophical speculation.

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A. Akasoy and G. Giglioni (eds.), *Renaissance Averroism and Its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, International Archives of the History of Ideas Archives internationales d'histoire des idées 211, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-5240-5_14,
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from those that will be explored here. By contrast with its lack of impact on studies of Renan himself, *Averroès et l'averroïsme* has cast a long shadow over medievalists, and it has been discussed quite frequently by those interested in Averroism.[4] But the notion of Averroism which subsequent historians have developed, criticised and, more recently, rejected is not, as it may appear, Renan's, but derives rather from a distortion of his subtle approach to intellectual history. The one discussion that does justice to Renan's method is a Preface by Alain de Libera.[5] The following pages attempt to go further along the path set by de Libera, looking more closely at the place of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* back within the context of Renan's intellectual development and, in doing so, to bring out the subtle methodology which makes the book, though in many respects out-dated, one that still has lessons for medievalists.

Renan's Works and Averroès et l'Averroïsme

Renan is famous, above all, as the author of the *Vie de Jésus*, first published in 1863, which was translated immediately into 10 languages and sold 60,000 copies within 5 months and nearly 200,000 within 4 years of its publication.[6] The book's last sentence – Renan, a consummate rhetorician, was a master of pointed conclusions – gives a good idea why. 'All centuries to come,' he writes, 'will proclaim that, among the sons of men, none greater than Jesus was ever born.' Jesus, as the preceding 450 pages had made clear, was not the Son of God, yet in his life, that of an ordinary mortal, he not only symbolised, but realised the highest moral ideal: the *Vie de Jésus* compensated its readers for its denial of the supernatural with a credible and sympathetic human hero. Renan went on to write an 8-volume *Histoire des origines du Christianisme* (1866-1881) and a 5-volume *Histoire du peuple d'Israël* (1887-1893), as well as publishing on philosophical matters, problems of the day and politics as well as memoirs and even drama.

La Vie de Jésus was the outcome of the spiritual and intellectual journey that had taken him from his modest family in the small Breton town of Tréguier in 1823 to the Collège de France. Like many intellectually gifted boys from such backgrounds, the priesthood was seen as his natural destiny, a vocation encouraged by his pious and ambitious mother; and a rich donor enabled him to have a seminary education. At St Sulpice, in his early twenties, Renan began to acquire the reputa-

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[4] Jean-Paul Charnet, 'Le dernier surgeon de l'Averroïsme en occident: *Averroès et l'Averroïsme* de Renan', in *Multiple Averroès*, ed. Jean Jolivet (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978), pp. 333–348 [Charnet is a specialist on Islamic history and politics]; Pierre Thillet, 'Renan, Averroes et l'Averroïsme', in *Mémorial Ernest Renan*, ed. Jean Balcou (Paris: Champion, 1993), pp. 239–250 [Thillet is an historian of ancient philosophy and its Arabic tradition]; Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, *Renan, la Bible et les juifs* (Paris: Arléa, 2008), pp. 246–257.

[5] Reprint of 2nd edn of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* by Maisonneuve & Larose, Paris (2002), pp. 7–19.

[6] Antoine Albalat, *La Vie de Jésus d'Ernest Renan (*Paris: Société française d'éditions littéraires et techniques, 1933), pp. 62–63.

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tion of a formidable Hebrew and Syriac specialist, but also, especially on account of his study of the biblical evidence, to have serious doubts about his faith – especially about the divinity of Jesus Christ. He agreed, hesitantly, to accept the tonsure and Minor Orders, but by autumn 1845, he had decided, with the financial support of Henriette, his self-sacrificing, free-thinking sister, to leave St Sulpice and his preparation for the priesthood and make his career in the university.

For this career, and despite his reputation in oriental languages, he needed academic qualifications, and he set about taking the *licence* (1846), the *agrégation* in Philosophy, in which he did brilliantly (1848), and then planning and writing the two theses which were needed for him to become a *docteur ès lettres*. In June 1847, Renan wrote in a letter to his Henriette, whom acted as his confidante, that he had decided on their subjects and that nothing would now make him change them.[7] The French thesis was to be on the *History of Greek Studies among the Peoples of the East*, and he announced an ambitious plan for it, covering the Jewish, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Georgian, Armenian and even Indian traditions. The Latin thesis was to be on Averroes 'the famous Arab philosopher, seen as a commentator on Aristotle and especially on the destiny of Averroism and its influence on scholastic philosophy.' He explains that he had been encouraged to take on the subject because it would please Victor Cousin – a figure of immense power in the world of French academic philosophy at the time – who was known to have complained that there was no work on the subject accessible to those ignorant of 'eastern languages'.[8] In fact, Renan ended up by turning this study of Averroes and Averroism into his French thesis. It was first published in 1852, and it was the first of his many books to appear. Given, then, that it was, apparently a youthful work, written for a specific academic purpose, on a subject chosen at least in part to please a powerful potential patron, on a subject outside his main sphere of interest, are the Renan specialists not right to pay such little attention to *Averroès et l'averroïsme*?

Yet these details about the origins of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* are misleading if they are not set in context. Although it was his first published book, Renan had already written three major works. He had completed a version of his *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* – an extraordinary and lengthy demonstration of his philological skills – by 1847, when he submitted it for and won the Prix Volney.[9] He had also completed by 1848 another long study – the recent edition runs to over 700 pages – of the study of Greek in the medieval Latin West.[10] In 1848 and

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[7] Ernest Renan, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Henriette Psichari, 10 vols (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947–1961) (hereafter: *OC*), IX, pp. 1002–1003.

[8] The choice of subject did indeed please Cousin, whom he met for the first time in October 1848 and who was 'ravi de ma thèse sur Averroès' (Letter to Henriette 22 October 1848, *OC* IX, p. 1134).

[9] It was first published in 1855, though its appearance was already announced on the back of the first edition of *Averroès et l'averroïsme*: *OC* VIII, pp. 129–589; cf. p. 134.

[10] *Histoire de l'étude de la langue grecque dans l'Occident de l'Europe depuis la fin du Ve siècle jusqu'à celle du XIVe*. The work, though 'crowned' by the Académie des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres in 1848 and announced to appear soon in 1852, remained in manuscript until it was edited by Perrine Simon-Nahum and published in Paris (Cerf, 2009).

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the early months of 1849 he went on to write an almost equally long and more theoretical work, *L'Avenir de la science* – a sort of declaration of faith in the value of 'science', especially the human sciences and, in particular philology. He was dissuaded from publishing anything but short extracts from it at the time, and only in old age did Renan put the work (subtitled *Pensées de 1848* and complete with its original dedication to Eugène Burnouf [d. 1852], dated March 1849) into print.[11] *Averroès et l'averroïsme* was, then, no ordinary doctoral thesis but the work of a man who, though under 30 when it was published, was already a prolific and wide-ranging writer and was acknowledged as a formidable philologist. Moreover, despite his profession to his sister that his plans for his thesis subjects were fixed, Renan did make an important change. What he had conceived as a very ambitious French thesis, ranging over Greek studies in every oriental culture, was repackaged as a short (74-page) Latin dissertation, on the narrow (though fascinating and important) subject of Aristotelian philosophy in Syriac. That monograph was published in 1852, and as good as forgotten,[12] whereas Renan thought highly enough of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* to produce a second edition in 1861, in which he left the main arguments and conclusions unaltered, but went over every paragraph, making many minor changes and adding some new material.[13]

It is hardly surprising, given his own background, that he should have been interested by Averroes, since, from the sources at hand, Averroes could be made into a champion of philosophy who contradicts religious orthodoxy and was persecuted for doing so. Although there was a widespread popular link between Averroes and impiety, Renan's portrait of him as the sober exponent, to the élite, of a philosophical understanding of the world, at odds with Islamic orthodoxy, was new. His treatment of Averroes's exile late in his life gives an idea of this change of emphasis. The two fullest earlier accounts by historians of philosophy, in Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae* from nearly a century before and in Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, published in 1810,[14] hold that Averroes's philosophy was merely an excuse for his political enemies to secure his condemnation. For Renan, by contrast, it was the result of the victory of the 'religious party' over the 'philosophical party'.[15] The history of Averroism also allowed Renan to develop this theme of philosophy and its oppression by religious orthodoxy on a wider scale, in discussing the extinction within Islam of the Aristotelian tradition of philosophy represented by Averroes and

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[11] It was first printed in 1890: *OC* III, pp. 715–1151.

[12] *De philosophia peripatetica apud Syros* (Paris: Durand, 1852). The work was not reprinted, even in Renan's *Oeuvres Complètes.*

[13] The first edition: *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (Paris: Duran, 1852 [AA^1]); the second edition of 1861 is reprinted in *OC* III, pp. 11–365 [AA^2].

[14] Johann Jacob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, 2nd edn, 6 vols (Leipzig: Weidmann and Reich, 1767), III, pp. 100–101; Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 12 vols (Leipzig; Barth, 1810), VIII/1, p. 420.

[15] AA^1, pp. 18–19; AA^2, pp. 37–38.

[16] See the Chap. 16 by Akasoy in this volume.

Editor's Proof

the struggles of the Latin Averroistic tradition against the Church authorities.[16] These links between Averroes, Averroism and the challenges and questions have been noticed by historians, as have possible lines of influence by Averroist doctrine on Renan's own thinking.[17] But little attention has been paid to a more central way in which *Averroès et l'averroïsme* develops the ideas of methodology that Renan had been was thinking out at this time: the value of misinterpretation and myth in the history of thought.[18]

Myth and Misinterpretration

It was not just his personal position as an overt, if quiet, dissident that drew Renan to Averroes and Averroism: in dealing with this subject, he was able to consider from a different angle the very problems which his anguished fascination with the identity of Jesus set for him. Renan had lost his belief in Jesus's divinity as a result of his careful study of the historical evidence using the tools of philology, for him the leader of the scientific disciplines. Yet he was far from celebrating this loss as a straightforward scientific achievement: the figure and story of Christ remained important, and deserved to do so, even once the Biblical account of him was recognised not to be literally true.

In 1849, at the time he was working on *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, Renan wrote an article on the various theories being advanced about Christ,'Historiens critiques de la vie de Jésus', in which he also develops his own views.[19] Among the progressive theorists, Renan distinguishes between the rationalists and the mythologists. The rationalists accept the basic truth of the miraculous stories, but seek to explain them by reference to the transmission and the forms in which facts were expressed at different times. Renan finds this selective approach to the credibility of the evidence unconvincing, and such mechanical methods 'ill-suited to preserving the dignity of Jesus's character.'[20] The mythologists, by contrast, deny any truth to the stories and try to explain how they were formed without any real foundation. The leader of the mythologists – and the originator of the contrast between the rational and mythological approaches – was David Strauss, the German theologian whose

[17] Thillet ('Renan', pp. 241–242) points out the parallels between Averroes's career and Renan's; Charnay ('Le dernier surgeon', pp. 340–341) points out how Renan rejects the Averroistic 'theory of double truth' but ends up adopting a position not far from Averroes's idea of there being a single Intellect for all humans.

[18] Harold W. Wardman, *Renan, historien philosophe* (Paris: Société d'enseignement supérieur, 1979), pp. 19–20, does indeed quote an important passage of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* on the value of misinterpretation in his treatment of Renan's thought on religion.

[19] 'Les historiens critiques de Jésus', *Liberté de penser*, 3 (1849), pp. 365–384 and 437–470 (Paris: Joubert), reprinted in *Études d'histoire religieuse* (1857) = *OC* VII, pp. 11–303 (pp. 116–167). Page references are to both editions because in some cases there are changes.

[20] 'Historiens critiques', p. 371 (*OC* VII, p. 124).

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Life of Jesus Critically Examined, had caused such shock when it was first published in 1835.[21] Renan insists that, despite his reputation in France, Strauss is moderate theologically. Strauss, he says, applies Hegelian philosophy of history to the gospel story. The real Christ, for Strauss, is not any historical person, but the human spirit. This view leaves Strauss free to affirm orthodox Christian doctrine whilst radically denying the historicity of the gospels. The most radical German thinkers such as Feuerbach, Renan explains, go much further in denying the Incarnation.

Renan calls his own view a 'Christologie philosophique'. If, in an ideal *History of Philosophy*, Plato deserves one volume, then Jesus, Renan contends, deserves two.[22] 'It is time,' he says

> that reason should stop criticizing religions as constructions made in opposition to it by a rival power, and that it at last should recognise itself in all of humanity's products, without distinction or antithesis.[23]

The central notion in this 'philosophical Christology' – it is beautifully expressed in one of Renan's magnificent conclusions – is that the object of Christian adoration is an ideal hero whom the philosopher knows not to confuse with a real, historical figure:

> Such is the philosopher's Christology. In his adoration he does not confuse a real hero with an ideal hero. We must without hesitation adore Christ – that is to say, the character who comes out of the Gospels, because all that is sublime participates in the divine, and the Christ of the Gospels is the most beautiful incarnation of God in its most beautiful form, which is man as a moral being. It is this which is truly the son of God and the son of Man, God in man. These great interpreters of Christianity were not mistaken when the had him be born on earth without a father and attributed his procreation not to ordinary intercourse but to a virgin womb and the heavenly power. It is a magnificent myth, an admirable symbol that hides the true explanation of the ideal Jesus beneath its covering. But as for the Galilean who had this name, I do not know him …[24]

Like David Strauss, the young Renan is a mythologist. But where Strauss borrows from Hegel to deduce by reasoning that there must exist a God-Man, but not as an historical individual, Renan looks to the myth which through the centuries human beings have woven over an original reality. For Strauss, it is for the enlightened theologian to demythologise religion, replacing the myths that crude orthodoxy takes as history with a true philosophical understanding of God. For the young Renan, it is the myth – an elaborate human creation, expressing a conception of morality – which is the valuable content of religion: the two books on Jesus the Philosopher in his ideal

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[21] *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835–1836). There is an English translation of the fourth edition translated (for the main part) by the novelist George Eliot, published in 1846: re-print – David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (London: SCM Press, 1973).

[22] Renan made the same remark in his *L'Avenir de la science* (*OC* III, p. 946) and he anticipated it in his *Cahiers de jeunesse* (*Nephthali*) (*OC* IX, pp. 189–190).

[23] 'Historiens critiques', p. 451; *OC* VII, p. 156 (where the text is revised).

[24] 'Historiens critiques', p. 469; *OC* VII, p. 166, where the final sentence is changed to read: 'As for the man of Galilee, who is almost stolen away from our eyes by the reflections of divinity, what does it matter if he escapes us?'

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History of Philosophy would not be concerned with the thoughts of an actual Nazarene religious leader, but with thinking through which generations of human beings have created a mythical and yet truly living Christ. By the time he wrote *La Vie de Jésus*, Renan had taken a further step away from Strauss, since he now claimed that the historical Jesus, though not divine, *really* incarnated the virtues attributed to him. This development enabled Renan, using his historical and textual scholarship, to tell the simple, moving story of Jesus which makes his book so remarkable – and made it so popular. But from the perspective of methodology in intellectual history and the history of philosophy, his earlier approach is richer and more fruitful. And it is explored further, and worked out in detail, in the book he was writing at the same time as he published 'Historiens critiques', *Averroès et l'averroïsme*.

As usual, it is in his conclusion that Renan brings out the aims and methodology of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* in their full richness; not surprisingly, because Renan always remains a conscientious scholar, and the conclusion is the moment when he can leave his apparatus of scholarship behind and draw out ideas that may have remained implicit in his text, or its method, until then. The long, final paragraph of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* centres, like the conclusion of 'Historiens critiques de Jésus' on the value of misinterpretation.

> The history of Averroism is, correctly speaking, nothing but the history of an enormous misinterpretation. He was a very loose interpreter of Peripatetic teaching, and Averroes found himself interpreted in a still looser way. Modified and then modified again, Aristotelian philosophy comes down to this: the denial of the supernatural, or miracles, of angels, of demons, of divine intervention; the explanation of religions and beliefs as the results of imposture. Clearly neither Aristotle nor Averroes at all thought that one day their teaching would come down to this. But, in men who are raised to the dignity of symbols, we must always distinguish their personal lives from their lives beyond the grave, what they were in reality and what opinion has made of them. For the philologist, a text has only one sense. But for the human spirit, which has put into this text its life and all its desires, for the human spirit which, every hour, feels new needs, the philologist's scrupulous interpretation cannot suffice. The text which it has adopted must resolve all its doubts, satisfy all its desires. From this there comes about the [1861: a sort of] necessity for misinterpretation in the philosophical and religious history of humankind. In periods of authority misinterpretation is, as it were, the revenge of the human spirit against the infallibility of the official text. People surrender their liberty on one point only to regain it on another. They are able to find a thousand ways out, a thousand subtleties to escape from the chain that has been laid on them. Distinctions, commentaries, *addenda*, explanations – this is how, weighed down by the two greatest authorities which have ever reigned over thought, the Bible and Aristotle, the spirit still remained free. It is in this way that there is no proposition so outrageous that it has never been propounded by some theologian, happily claiming not to have strayed beyond the bounds of orthodoxy, no doctrine so mystical that it could not be put forward in the guise of an interpretation of Aristotle. What would have become of humanity if, from eighteen centuries ago, it had understood the Bible according to the dictionaries of Gesenius and Bretschneider? Nothing is created by a text that is too exactly understood. Interpretation which is truly fecund – which finds in an [1861: the] authority accepted once for all time an answer to human nature's ever new needs – cannot be achieved by philology, but by the conscience alone.[25]

[25] *AA*[1], pp. 345–346; *AA*[2], pp. 322–323. The aspect of Renan's work brought out in this conclusion, though noted by others (e.g. Charnay, 'Le dernier surgeon', p. 340), is treated most fully and with the greatest penetration by Alain de Libera ('Préface', pp. 15–19).

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Just as, through their myth-making, humans gave reality to an ideal Jesus, so through their distortions over the generations scholars make Aristotle and Averroes serve as leaders in the search for the very liberty which the authoritative status of these writers seems to deny. For the full force and paradox of his position to be apparent, one must bear in mind that Gesenius's *Thesaurus philologicus criticus linguae Hebraeae* was a revered authority for Renan: the most important of the tools which, by allowing to reach a proper historical understanding of the Bible, drove him from his original faith to, as he thought, a rational and correct understanding of the universe. On the one hand, then, the scientific investigation of texts, applied to the Bible, is an engine of progress; but, as he makes clear in 'Historiens critiques', there is an indispensable content to the myths which philology unmasks, which we should continue to value as philosophy, once we have learned not to read scripture literally. On the other hand, the work of myth-making has taken place not just around the founding figures of religions – who thereby become authorities and establish orthodoxies that scientific reason needs to take apart – but also on the scientific texts which, by constituting an orthodoxy, obstruct scientific progress. This myth-making serves the cause of the very scepticism and the critical use of reason which identify as mythical the central claims of Scripture.

Renan's view is, therefore, a complex one. It holds in tension and succeeds in valuing both the human spirit's fecundity in fostering myth and misinterpretation *and* the philologists' scientific expertise in demythologizing and in correcting error. Whilst Renan clearly enjoys the human spirit's 'revenge on the infallibility of the official text,' his job is to display that victory, and that can be done only with the scientific tools of philology, the enemies of the misinterpretation which he celebrates.

The reader who, having started *Averroès et l'averroïsme* by reading its conclusion, turns back to the preceding chapters is likely, then, to be disappointed. Despite his strictures against philology, Renan is a philologist – and, by the nature of the case, an outdated one; much of the book, so far from being mythography, consists in the painstaking and critical assemblage of information to establish historical facts, and in careful analysis of texts. In these detailed investigations, however, Renan is consistently carrying through the aim which he reveals at the end in his methodological *credo.* For example, if Averroism is the story of misinterpretation – first of Aristotle and then of Averroes himself – Renan needs to show that Averroes was not just repeating Aristotle's doctrine. He is one of the first – perhaps the first – intellectual historian to express the insight (also stated in his concluding paragraph) that commentary can be a method of creating new ideas, under the guise of explaining old ones:

> Although Ibn Rushd never aspired to any glory but that of a commentator, we should not let this apparent modesty deceive us. The human spirit always knows how to reclaim its independence. Chain it to a text, and it will be able to regain its liberty through interpreting this text. It will falsify it rather than give up the most inalienable of its rights, the individual exercise of thought. Under the pretext of commenting Aristotle, the Arabs, like the scholastic, were able to create a philosophy full of their own elements, and certainly very different from that which had been taught at the Lycaeum.[26]

[26] *AA*[1], pp. 66–67; *AA*[2], pp. 84–85.

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Renan also investigates how a myth comes to develop. The most obviously mythographic side of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* are the pages devoted to discussing the links between Averroes and the story of the three Impostors (Moses, Jesus and Muhammad). Renan both recognises that the real Averroes had nothing to do with this story, and yet that there is an aspect of his thought which gives a sense to his mythical responsibility for this blasphemy – a tendency to treat religions comparatively.[27] He sees, perhaps drawing on his own personal experience, that once this step is taken, however piously, religious constructs are likely to become weak and collapse.

The Historiography of Thirteenth-Century Latin Averroism: the Triumph of Philology

As historian of the whole Averroistic movement – in Jewish philosophy, in the Latin Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, Renan has had almost no followers. In a more specialised academic world, poorer in polymaths like Renan, each of these three branches has been followed by a different group of experts, often with little knowledge of each others' work. The one exception is a short but fine book written by a duo – a specialist on the Latin tradition, Alain de Libera, and a scholar of the Hebrew tradition, Maurice-Ruben Hayoun – and deliberately given the same name as Renan's own work.[28]

In the field of thirteenth-century Latin Averroism, however, a whole tradition of history-writing has followed on from Renan's work, and it is here that Renan was at his most innovative. Earlier historians had noted the existence of Averroists in the universities in the fourteenth century and later, but Renan was the first to push Averroism back to the thirteenth century. As Ruedi Imbach has observed, 'without knowing a single text that corresponds to this current, without even being able to name a single author, he created from almost nothing thirteenth-century Averroism.'[29]

The historiography of Latin Averroism since Renan began it has been well told by Imbach and others, and there is no need here to do more than recall its broad outlines.[30] In the period after Renan's book, inaugurated by Barthélémy Hauréau's 1886 article on Boethius of Dacia and the work of Pierre Mandonnet, the idea of thirteenth-century Averroism was given apparent historical solidity by the writings of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia (a figure not mentioned at all by Renan).[31] Further texts were

[27] *AA*[1], pp. 233–234; *AA*[2], pp. 228–229. See Akasoy in this volume for further references.

[28] Alain de Libera and Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991).

[29] Ruedi Imbach, 'L'Averroïsme latin du XIIIe siècle', in *Gli studi di filosofia medievale fra Otto e Novocento. Contributo a un bilancio storiografico*, ed. Ruedi Imbach and Alfonso Maierù (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1991), pp. 191–208 (195).

[30] In addition to Imbach, 'L'Averroïsme', see Gianfranco Fioravanti, 'Boezio di Dacia e la storiografia sull'averroismo', *Studi medievali*, 3a ser., 7 (1966), pp. 283–322. A fascinating recent contribution on an aspect of the subject that has very little to do, however, with Renan is Luca Bianchi, *Pour une historie de la double vérité* (Paris: Vrin, 2008).

[31] Barthélemy Hauréau, 'Un des hérétiques condamnés à Paris en 1277: Boèce de Dacie', *Journal des Savants* (1866), pp. 176–183; Mandonnet's book, *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIIIme siècle: étude critique et documents inédits* (Fribourg: Libraire de l'université) was published in 1899, but it had been preceded by articles: cf. Imbach 'L'Averroïsme', p. 195.

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added to this body of work by Martin Grabmann's discoveries and attributions.[32] But the historical construction that had been built on Renan's notion began to be dismantled from the 1930s onwards by the work of Fernand van Steenberghen. In Van Steenberghen's many important publications on the area, there are two ideas which are very much his own and which he proposes with great force. The first, which depends on contestable attributions, is that Siger gave up the extreme position of his early works that there is only one intellect for the whole human species and adopted and, later in his career, accepted Aquinas's position.[33] The second is that there was *no* Latin Averroism in the thirteenth century. From the time of John of Jandun (d. 1328), he accepts that we can speak of Averroism, but philosophers such as Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia were, rather, 'Radical Aristotelians'.[34] Although many aspects of Van Steenberghen's work have been disputed, more recent scholars have tended to carry on his deconstruction of thirteenth-century Latin Averroism rather than to reverse it. René Antoine Gauthier's magnificently detailed research has led him to conclude that the earliest influence of Averroes on the Latin universities had little to do with the positions later considered Averroist, and that Siger of Brabant was a less substantial figure, intellectually and in university politics, than had been supposed.[35] His view is extreme,[36] but most scholars now would, none the less, agree with Imbach that

> the multiplication of the sources and a more precise readings of the texts has brought about the slow death of the spectre that Ernest Renan conjured into existence. It is not only Van Steenberghen who doubts the existence of a clearly delimited, uniform current called 'Latin Averroism'. Rather than chasing the shadow of this phantom, we should study how Averroes is used in texts.[37]

Imbach may have the right prescription for how the mainstream of philosophical work on Averroes and his influence should be conducted, and yet there is an aspect of Renan's work which he and most recent scholars should not dismiss. Granted, 'Latin Averroism' is in many respects a phantom; but Renan recognised

[32] See Imbach 'L'Averroïsme', pp. 199–202.

[33] For basic bibliography (including details of the attack on Van Steenberghen's attribution by Bruno Nardi and others), see Imbach, 'L'Averroïsme', pp. 202–205.

[34] The fullest exposition of this idea, with many references to his earlier presentations of it and arguments against those who have criticised it, is in 'L'Averroisme Latin' in Fernand van Steenberghen, *Introduction à l'étude de la philosophie médiévale* (Louvain and Paris: Publications Universitaires and Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1974), pp. 531–554.

[35] René Antoine Gauthier, 'Notes sur les débuts (1225–1240) du premier "averroïsme"'; 'Notes sur Siger de Brabant: I. Siger en 1265'; 'Notes sur Siger de Brabant: II. Aubry de Reims et la scission des Normands', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 66; 67; 68 (1982; 1983; 1984), pp. 321–374; 201–232; 3–39. Gauthier is, however, mistaken in identifying the 'first Averroism' of the earlier thirteenth century (each human has their own agent and possible intellect) with Averroes's genuine doctrine and claiming that the 'second Averroism'(the agent intellect and the possible/material intellect are separate) – which is the doctrine of Averroes's long commentary on *On the Soul* – was the creation of Latin theologians.

[36] Other recent writers re-read Siger so as to make of him,rather, a weightier and more consistent thinker than had been thought: see, for example, François-Xavier Putallaz, *Insolente liberté. Controverses et condamnations au XIIIe siècle* (Paris and Fribourg : Éditions du Cerf and Éditions universitaires, 1995) (Vestigia 15), pp. 15–49.

[37] 'Averroïsme', p. 207.

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it as such.[38] Chasing such phantoms is a dangerous occupation, and it may lead away from precise philosophical work – something to which, in any case, Renan had little inclination. But medieval philosophical speculation took place within a wider intellectual context, and some of that context is of the shadowy sort which occupied the young Renan. The great achievement of *Averroès et l'averroïsme* is to have shown that this too is open to scientific investigation.[39]

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An Afterword

I have not considered in this article a notorious aspect of Renan's thought: despite being a pioneer of the history of philosophy in Islam, he severely criticised the religion and culture of Islam on several occasions, as in 'L'Islamisme et la science' of 1883: for a short introduction, cf. Nelly Lahoud, 'Islamic Responses to Europe at the Dawn of Colonialism', in *Western Political Thought in Dialogue with Asia*, ed. Cary Nederman and Takashi Shogimen (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), pp. 163–185 (pp. 170–172) and cf. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 130–148. On the one hand, he thought that religious orthodoxy had succeeded in stifling reason within Islam; on the other hand, he had – dating back at least to his first major work, the *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* – a racial theory according to which semitic peoples are not given to philosophy (the 'Arab' philosophers, he explained, were Persians or Spaniards [!]) and a linguistic theory according to which semitic languages are not fitted for philosophizing. His views are, however, quite complex, even in this area, since he also held that the semitic peoples had made an irreplaceable contribution to human progress as the inventors of monotheistic religion; and his attack on Islam for stifling reason is part of a more general attitude to religions, including Christianity. Some of Renan's arguments have been used by those today who wish to slight the intellectual achievements of Islam and see 'Christian Europe' as the saviour of 'Greek rationalism': Sylvain Gougenheim, *Aristotle au Mont Saint-Michel: Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne* (Paris: Seuil, 2008); see the exposé by Djamel Eddine Kouloughli, 'Langues sémitiques et traduction. Critique de quelques vieux mythes', in *Les Grecs, les Arabes et nous: Enquête sur l'islamophobie savante*, ed. Philippe Büttgen et al. (Paris: Fayard, 2009), pp. 79–118, but, arguably, their position has almost nothing in common with his. Alain de Libera, however, takes a different view ('Préface', pp. 18–19), seeing Renan as the inventor of 'Arabism' and 'forger of the myth of Greek rationality.

[38] For an argument that, even from a narrower philosophical point of view, it *is* worth keeping the label Latin Averroism, see John Marenbon, 'Latin Averroism', in *Islamic Crosspollinations. Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. Anna Akasoy, James E. Montgomery and Peter E. Pormann (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), pp. 135–147.

[39] I should like to thank the anonymous reader of the volume for a valuable comment about Gauthier's understanding of Averroes, which I have followed.

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Chapter 15
Leo Strauss and the Alethiometer

James E. Montgomery

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There is much about Leo Strauss which I find peculiar, perplexing and confusing, principal among which is the following observation: that a twentieth century intellectual, trying to come to terms with the philosophical, moral and political legacy of Nietzsche, grappling with the implications of the theories of Heidegger, and unwilling to accommodate the demands of modernism, should have exerted arguably the most hegemonic influence (quantitatively, if not qualitatively) on the study of Arabic-Islamic philosophy.

I do not claim to be an expert on the theories of Leo Strauss, or to have read more than what I take to be a representative sample of his many writings.[1] I also do not claim expertise in Arabic-Islamic philosophy. The following contribution does not

This study is the product of my attempts over two academic years (2007–2008 and 2008–2009) to teach a fourth-year undergraduate and taught graduate course on classical Arabic philosophical writings at the University of Cambridge. I owe much to the engagement, acumen and imagination of my students in allowing me to discern the contours of Leo Strauss's presence in the study of these texts. I dedicate this article to them. I am also grateful to Anna and Guido, the organisers of the conference and the editors of this volume, for offering a soapbox to an impostor.

[1] A standard Straussian objection to non-Straussian engagements with Strauss's thought is to allege that the critic has not fully read all the relevant aspects of Strauss's thought. I shall accordingly be clear about what I have read: Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1952]); 'Farabi's Plato', in *Louis Ginzberg: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), pp. 357–393; *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1959]); *On Tyranny, Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, eds Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1961]); *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965 [1953]). It is for my critics to decide whether I have read all the relevant aspects of Strauss's thought. The same caveat applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to my coverage of the scholarly studies of Strauss and the work of the Straussians. Two important works came to my attention too late for me properly to take account of

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pretend to be authoritative, and is not intended to be overly polemical, for this is a topic about which many, varied views are *passionately* held (perhaps the second peculiar, perplexing and confusing feature of Leo Strauss's writings and his legacy is the passionate enthusiasm, both in defence and in condemnation, which they occasion).

This is not to say that I mean to write as a neutral (I suspect that such a piece of writing would be incomprehensible), but rather to emphasise that, even though I am unconvinced by Strauss's theories, I have tried to be respectful in my survey of those features of his thought which, as far as I can determine, are of especial relevance for understanding why he approached Arabic philosophy (and I use the term advisedly, in place of the less felicitous but more accurate, in terms of Strauss's interests, Arabic-Islamic philosophy) as he did.

In this article, a survey of *some* of the theories of Leo Strauss, based on *some* of his writings and published private correspondence, I will not address directly the interests of that group of disciples, converts and neophytes who are regularly associated with the exploration, refinement and expansion of trends in Strauss's theories and their application to philosophical writings in Arabic – the group whom we Arabists normally intend when we use the label 'Straussian': Muhsin Mahdi, Charles Butterworth and others.

For just as the theories of the classical Islamic theological school of the Ashʿariyya or of the classical Islamic legal school of the Shāfiʿiyya are not identical with the theories of their eponyms, al-Ashʿarī and al-Shāfiʿī, so too the theories of the Straussians are not necessarily, as far as I can discern at any rate, identical with the theories of their eponym. In the Straussian interpretations I have read, filiations, genealogies, dependencies, as well as aberrations, refinements and exegetical reinterpretations can be exemplified in almost equal measure.[2] I will also not explore the rumour which I sometimes hear that Strauss entrusted his secret teaching to Mahdi and that Mahdi's version of Straussianism is how Strauss would have intended his theories to evolve in the domain of Arabic philosophy, had he chosen so to do. For a thinker renowned *and* notorious in equal measure for his theory of esotericism in the writing of philosophy, viz. that pre-modern philosophers concealed secret doctrines 'between the lines' of exoteric writings, such a rumour is hardly surprising.

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them in this study: Mark Bevir, 'Esotericism and Modernity: An Encounter with Leo Strauss', *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 1 (2007), pp. 201–218 (an intelligent examination of the hermeneutic ramifications of holding an esoteric philosophy of history); the articles contained in *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, ed. Steven B. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially the contributions by Leora Batnitzky, 'Leo Strauss and the "Theologico-Political Predicament"', pp. 41–62; Laurence Lampert, 'Strauss's recovery of Esotericism', pp. 63–92; and Joel L. Kraemer, 'The Medieval Arabic Enlightenment', pp. 137–170 (which is particularly illuminating on the centrality of Maimonides for Strauss).

[2] A convenient prospectus of Straussianism is to be found in Mahdi's two introductions and the foreword by Butterworth and Pangle in: Al-Fārābī, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, translated with an introduction by Muhsin Mahdi, revised edition with a foreword by Charles E. Butterworth and Thomas L. Pangle (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

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I will however note that this Straussianism raises for me the third peculiar, perplexing and confusing feature of Leo Strauss's writings and his legacy: his reverence as a vaticinator. In addition to his theory of esotericism, Strauss is perhaps most frequently associated with his supposed opposition of reason and revelation, of Athens and Jerusalem, in Straussian terminology (a matrix which is perhaps best approached as, in Strauss's own designation, the 'theologico-political problem'). According to many, then, Straussian and non-Straussian, Leo Strauss was a proponent of reason and an opponent of revelation and yet among this selfsame community, Strauss is often revered as a seer or a prophet, as a bringer of revelation, whose body of teaching supplants the revealed doctrines of Islam, Judaism or Christianity and is, at least as far as I can make out, hallowed as a new religion (and I hereby confuse, as many Straussians seem to, revelation and religion, and religion and theology).[3] Perhaps this is a little unfair, and we should rather see the relationship between Straussians and Strauss in terms of the practice of *takhrīj*, derivation, which obtained in the Islamic legal *madhhab* system, between qualified jurisprudent and eponym.[4] In the practice of *takhrīj*, a *mujtahid*, a qualified jurisprudent and independent legal reasoner, could arrogate his master's voice and, in pronouncing, for example, the words, 'al-Shāfiʿī said', might mean any of the following: 'al-Shāfiʿī said (in my hearing); al-Shāfiʿī said (in someone else's hearing); al-Shāfiʿī wrote; an adherent of al-Shāfiʿī said; and if al-Shāfiʿī were here to answer our question, I am sure he would say.'[5]

A fourth feature of Leo Strauss's writings which I find to be peculiar, perplexing and confusing is, perhaps, a purely personal one: I find it easier to read Derrida and Foucault, for example, than to read Strauss. Of course this statement may certainly speak volumes about my incapacities as a reader, but I suspect that there may be another aspect at play, for when I have worked my way through the at times seemingly impenetrable verbal thickets of the writings of the former (however long it takes), I think I may have understood the ideas which inform what it is that they are saying.

[3] I owe this observation to a lecture delivered by Professor Raymond Geuss of the University of Cambridge.

[4] See Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Christopher Melchert, 'The Meaning of *Qāla'l-Shāfiʿī* in Ninth Century Sources', in *ʿAbbasid Studies: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*, Proceedings of the Cambridge Meeting 6–10 July 2002, ed. James E. Montgomery (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 277–301; James E. Montgomery, 'Al-Čāḥiẓ and Hellenizing Philosophy', in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. Cristina D'Ancona (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 443–456.

[5] Melchert, 'The Meaning of *Qāla'l-Shāfiʿī*', p. 297. An anonymous reader's comment on this article brought home to me the fundamental ambiguity that *takhrīj* involves, not only for the authority, ownership and identification of the locutor's words but also for the interpretation of an eponym's words: an interpretation of what an eponym meant becomes in turn what he said. My reader is anonymous, and it is thus not clear to me whether s/he is a Straussian, though I suspect so (its criticism of incomplete comprehension is an inflection of a common Straussian defence of Strauss). *Takhrīj* bestows on this reader the full advantage of its ambiguity when pointing out a key underlying philosophical assumption about Strauss which I fail to see. In this way, *takhrīj* enables Strauss to talk for as long as those who are prepared to interpret and so talk in his words.

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With Leo Strauss, I have the opposite experience. Strauss writes, on the whole, clear English and at first blush seems not to pose the reader any problems of verbal impenetrability but even after repeated reading I find it very difficult to understand the ideas which inform what it is that he seems to be saying. As examples, I offer 'Farabi's *Plato*'; or Chapters Three to Four, 'The Setting' and 'The Teaching Concerning Tyranny', from *On Tyranny*, pp. 36–77, or even, in a nutshell, note 48 on pp. 111–112 of this work.

There are a number of steps to my argument in this article. The first is a close reading of a foundational text, Strauss's article, 'Persecution and the Art of Writing.' This reading seeks to use Strauss's own words to elucidate his exposition of a number of tenets central to his approach to Arabic philosophy. It leads naturally to a summary consideration of some of the defences and criticisms of his theories. The second step of my argument hinges upon a reference to an observation of Umberto Eco's made by Dimitri Gutas in criticism of Strauss. This step involves a rehearsal of Wayne Booth's distinction between '*under*standing' and '*over*standing' as part of a further close reading of a synopsis offered by Strauss of his article 'Farabi's Plato'. (I intend my survey of this synopsis to be a prolegomenon to a planned attempt in a future publication to overstand al-Fārābī's short treatise, *Falsafat Aflāṭūn*). The concluding step of my argument will be to review briefly some of the implications which the hegemonic understanding of the notion of philosophy entails for us as readers and writers of its history. Finally, I will highlight, by means of analogy, two aspects of how Strauss reads Arabic philosophy which I consider paramount for understanding the appeal of his approach.

Persecution and the Art of Writing

In this part of my chapter, I will first discuss Strauss's article, will briefly consider some of the arguments mustered by Strauss's most recent apologists and then survey the critiques of Strauss (and Straussians) voiced by some of his principal critics.

Now, the following is an exercise in close reading of one of Strauss's most famous short pieces, the article 'Persecution and the Art of Writing,' which originally appeared in the November issue of *Social Research* from 1941 (pp. 488–504) and published 11 years later in the collection of the same name. As another prominent strategy used by apologists for Strauss is the censure of non-Straussians for their distortion of his ideas, through misquotation of his words (thus establishing dubious methods, dubious motives and all too peccable scholarship), I have endeavoured to be as full and as accurate as possible in my use of his own words in the reconstruction of what I take to be his argument.

The article is, in Strauss's own words, an attempt to explore 'the relation between philosophy and politics … by starting from certain well-known phenomena of our century' (*Persecution*, p. 5), a problematic relationship with which he became familiar 'while studying the Jewish and Islamic philosophy of the Middle Ages.'

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Accordingly therefore this article ought to be read in conjunction with the third chapter of *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 'The Literary Character of *The Guide for the Perplexed*', Strauss's study of Maimonides also from 1941.[6] As, however, I know very little about Maimonides, it would be an imposture for me to attempt such an exercise and so will leave it out of consideration.

The article is divided into three parts and is preceded by an epigraph taken from a work by the Irish liberal, historian and moralist, William Edward Hartpole Lecky (d. 1903), in his day controversial author of works such as *A History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* (2 vols, 1865), and *A History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (2 vols, 1869), the eight volume *A History of England* (1878–1890) and *Democracy and Liberty* (1896). The quotation declares how 'vice has often proved an emancipator of the mind' though it is unclear to me what, if any, relationship there is between Lecky's 'vice' and Strauss's 'persecution' or whether in fact the emphasis in the quotation is placed on the emancipation of the mind, to say nothing of what Lecky might actually have meant by this statement.

The first part of the article addresses two issues: the issue of opinion and lies, and the imposition by figures of authority ('compulsion, or persecution', p. 22) and public acceptance of opinion and lies ('conviction', p. 23); and the issue of freedom of thought and its verbal, or better its entextualised, communication, in 'a totalitarian society' (p. 24).

Strauss posits a difference between how 'a considerable number of countries' over the last century – presumably he means the age of European liberalism – 'have enjoyed a practically complete freedom of public discussion' and the current state of these countries in which 'freedom is now suppressed and replaced by a compulsion to coordinate speech with such views as the government believes to be expedient or holds in all seriousness' (p. 22) – presumably he means Nazi Germany. This compulsion, for Strauss, exercises an effect on 'thoughts' as much as it does on 'actions.' This is a key point because it will allow him to posit a fundamental distinction between what an individual thinks and how he acts, for according to the motto given in the footnote, *scribere est agere* ('to write is to act'), writing is an action which is not free when performed under compulsion.[7]

In his discussion of the public acceptance of opinion, be that opinion a truth or a falsehood, Strauss (as he reveals in a footnote) here models his analysis on the

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[6] First published in *Essays on Maimonides: An Octocentennial Volume*, ed. Salo Wittmayer Baron (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 37–91.

[7] The reference to Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part 6, is telling, for in that work Descartes explains how he delayed publication of the treatise in reaction to the condemnation by persons of authority (i.e., the Inquisition) to another thinker's theories on a matter of physics (i.e., Galileo), one which Descartes had previously found unexceptionable, but which had been deemed prejudicial to the interests of state and religion (the condemnation of the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* in 1633 by the Congregation of the Holy Office). Descartes's text, however, is a supremely rhetorical and densely ambiguous exercise in self-justification, what one scholar has referred to as the ancestor of the modern grant application, and there seems to be artifice rather than self-censorship at work.

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conversation between Socrates and Glaucon in Book Three of Plato's *Republic*, about the contrivance of a necessary falsehood and the myth of the varying metallurgic composition of mankind, created of gold, silver, and bronze and so on.

For Socrates and Glaucon, education, and repetition through constant exposure to such a necessary mythical falsehood is the mechanism whereby its acceptance by subsequent generations can be guaranteed (what the Muslim theologians, jurisprudents and philosophers identified as *taqlīd*, the unquestioning acceptance of a dictum or doctrine of a previous authority, and *tawātur*, the uninterrupted and widespread acceptance of such a dictum or doctrine, to the point that its truthfulness is cognitively assured).

This discussion leads Strauss to the definition of what he terms, with a nod to Parmenides and Gulliver's beloved Houyhnhms, *logica equina*, 'that the truth of a statement which is constantly repeated by the head of a government and never contradicted is absolutely certain' (p. 23).

However there are inhabitants of such countries who do not 'follow the rules of *logica equina*' and they are those 'capable of truly independent thinking' (p. 23). Independent thinking is by its very nature not the acceptance of opinion, true or otherwise, and so it cannot be constrained by compulsion or persecution because it is independent. And just as independent thought cannot be suppressed in such regimes, so too the expression of that thought cannot be suppressed, because, in another nod to *The Republic*, 'it is a safe venture to tell the truth one knows to … reasonable friends' (p. 23).[8]

The next move in Strauss's exposition is vital, for the independent thinker can entextualise his views yet still evade detection and escape from the iron grip of persecution, but only on one condition, that he be 'capable of writing between the lines' (p. 24). This 'peculiar technique' is the product of 'the influence of persecution on literature' because it 'compels all writers who hold heterodox views to develop' it. And then Strauss proceeds to an enigmatic utterance which I struggle to comprehend. I will quote it in full. Of 'writing between the lines' he explains:

> This expression is clearly metaphoric. Any attempt to express its meaning in unmetaphoric language would lead to the discovery of a terra incognita, a field whose very dimensions are as yet unexplored and which offers ample scope for highly intriguing and even important investigations… almost the only preparatory work to guide the explorer in this field is buried in the writings of the rhetoricians of antiquity.[9]

Let me pass over the lack of substantiation, in the form of referencing for example, of this allusion to antique rhetorics. What is Strauss actually saying? That an unmetaphorical expression of 'writing between the lines' (does he mean the word 'esotericism' and if so why does he not use it – or is this a veiled reference to his own work?) would lead to a modern equivalent of the New World. Why does

[8] Plato, *The Republic*, V, 450 C-E. As I understand Socrates's point, it is not his personal security which he thinks is at risk but the damage he might do to the *intellectual* and *moral* wellbeing of his companions were he to make a mistake on the road to truth and implicate them in his error.

[9] Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p. 24.

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the figure he uses ('writing between the lines') not enable us to make this discovery? And is it really *terra incognita* if the antique rhetoricians have already adumbrated its cartography? And if this unknown land is as yet uncharted how can Strauss claim that it 'offers ample scope for highly intriguing and even important investigations'? I am reminded here of that feature of many classical Arabic esoteric texts which promise the initiate access to uncommon wisdom or unique insight and in so doing advertise, declare, their very esotericism. In this passage, I discern that aspect of Strauss which I previously referred to as his vaticination.

Strauss next coins an allegory, that of a historian living in a totalitarian country who is 'led by his investigations to doubt the soundness of the government-sponsored interpretation of the history of religion' (p. 24).

Let me pause to note the parallels: Strauss's philosophical excavations of previously held but forgotten or occluded truths on the proper relationship between philosophy and religion and philosophy and politics are represented by the historian whose researches have bestowed him with an Edenic moment, a vision of a long-forgotten creed; the 'government-sponsored interpretation' is, possibly, the Enlightenment and the ways in which it altered fundamentally the previous (proper) conception of philosophy by allying it to structures of power such as ruling regimes; and, a point which Strauss nowhere makes explicit, the dominant ideology is effectively a religion, i.e., 'utterances in the holy book or books of the ruling party' (p. 25). And let me note once again that this is a very particular conception of religion, of religion as revelation and its orthodoxies. The historian's promotion of his independently derived interpretation will take the form of a pro-governmental polemic directed against his independently derived interpretation, 'what he would call the liberal view' (p. 24). The polemic is well suited to such a means of divulging independent thought, for by its very nature a polemic must state the views of which it is polemical and he would achieve this 'in the quiet, unspectacular and somewhat boring manner' (p. 24) of the petty pedant.

However, 'when he reached the core of the argument' (and by this Strauss may intend a formal feature of this polemical text, i.e., its 'central passage' [p. 24]), the historian would 'write three or four sentences in that terse and lively style which is apt to arrest the attention of young men who love to think' (p. 24). Who are these young men, where have they suddenly come from, how do we know they love to think, and what is that style to which Strauss refers? As Strauss does not provide us with an answer, I think I am entitled to suggest that the notice of unmetaphorical language leading to the *terra incognita* which I have just discussed may be an example of this arresting style.

At this point in his tractate, the historian will remove his kid gloves and articulate the very essence of liberalism, in its pristine prelapsarian form, before it became through its success the ancillary of ruling regimes. This crystalline articulation becomes 'the forbidden fruit' (p. 25) of the Garden of Eden, the historian's (subversive) promotion of state-sponsored attacks on this doctrine will now repel the young man whose repeated perusal of the work will allow him to discern in 'the quotations from the authoritative books' (subversively and disingenuously being promoted) 'significant additions to those few terse statements which occur in the center of the

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rather short first part' (p. 25). And let me also note that, like the works of al-Fārābī, which Strauss studies, such as his *Falsafat Aflāṭūn* (*The Philosophy of Plato*), one of this historian's principal techniques is a sort of ventriloquism, the use of another's statements to voice one's own views, and the essence of his craft is the telling juxtaposition of these statements so as to present the truth exclusively 'between the lines'.

The resultant texts are deceptive then: private communications masquerading as public declamations, aimed at careful readers. They avoid detection because firstly careless reading is a characteristic of thoughtlessness and because secondly, as Socrates knew, 'virtue is knowledge' (p. 25). As the thoughtful man is virtuous so he will also be knowledgeable and thus the esoteric author's secret is safe in his keeping and will not be divulged to hostile authorities. Moreover these compositional strategies and techniques of evasion will defeat the machinations of the official censor for the censor has to prove the author's intelligence, his excellence in the craft of writing and establish that his use of an ambiguous expression or poor construction of a sentence (other prominent techniques of writing 'between the lines') was intentional, a proof which is impossible of achievement because 'Homers nods from time to time' (p. 26).[10]

This is an important passage, for Strauss nowhere (to the best of my knowledge) explains why these techniques of 'writing between the lines' are not liable to Ockham's razor – slips and blunders may simply be slips and blunders. Yet, Strauss knows that they are not slips and blunders because there is in this process a perfect convergence of writer and reader, a convergence made possible by the process of independent thought and, it seems to me, only communicable through vatic insight.

Parts II (pp. 26–32) and III (pp. 32–37) address two issues which Part I raises: 'historicism' (p. 32), or the ancient-modern divide; and 'persecution'.

Part II begins with some 'reasonable' (p. 26) assumptions which I find very difficult to assess, for they seem to me to be as unlikely (or unreasonable) as they are likely (or reasonable) and so completely indeterminate without the provision of further evidence or discussion: the likely frequency in the past of 'suppression of independent thought;' and the curious claims 'that earlier ages produced proportionately as many men capable of independent thought as we find today;' and 'that at least some of these men combined understanding with caution' (p. 26). These assumptions lead Strauss to wonder whether 'some of the greatest writers of the past' presented 'their views on all the then crucial questions exclusively between the lines' (p. 26).

Before we can discern the adaptations of 'literary technique to the requirements of persecution' (p. 26), we must first reassess 'a comparatively recent progress in historical research,' the practice of reading an author and his works in terms which we may conveniently refer to as contextualist: 'each period' and 'each author' must

[10] And here one of the principal weaknesses of Strauss's brand of authorial intentionalism (what I see as the impossibility of discerning when a nod is a nod and when it is a wink) is attributed to a Straussian bogey-man, the censor. See further the next paragraph.

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be understood in their own terms and there must be coherence between the terms which we use to interpret a writer from the past and those which would at least have been 'in fairly common use in his time' (p. 27). Consequently an author's 'explicit statements' (p. 27) are hegemonic and decisive and thus 'between the lines' communication is excluded *a priori* from our practices of reading and interpretation.

Strauss concedes that 'explicit evidence showing that the author believed *a* not to be *b* … cannot possibly be forthcoming' (p. 27). Consequently, Strauss's next move in Part II is to show how recent salient trends in interpreting authors of the past (from political thinkers such as Hobbes to the Greek Hippocratics, from Averroes to Aristotle, from Lessing to Montesquieu) are not the result of the inexorable march of 'progress in historical exactness' but rather the result of (a contextually conditioned?) 'change in the intellectual climate' (p. 29), the transformation or rejection of 'the rationalist tradition' (p. 29).

Thus the emergence of historicism is shown to be a modern phenomenon, to be itself historicist, a result of the abandonment of 'the tradition of historical exactness' (p. 29) and the *a priori* exclusion of 'the most important facts of the past from human knowledge' (p. 30), though it is by no means clear to me that Strauss has shown *in this work* what these facts are, or how he thinks that we know what they are. This is presumably the task of 'the philosopher' and not the 'historian', a revealing distinction for understanding his own studies which he makes on page 29, though once again it is unclear to me if and when Strauss ever ceases to write as both.

In order for us as historians to preserve 'the tradition of historical exactness' (p. 29) we must 'adapt the rules of certainty' which guide our research 'to the nature of the subject' (p. 30). But is this not the same claim as the historicists make, that it is the subject (and its context) which determines the hermeneutic devices we apply and not vice-versa? Yes, it is, I expect Strauss might answer, but these devices exclude one vital and determinative consideration – persecution and the suppression of independent thought. For if we start from persecution and its nature, we will radically re-conceptualise our understandings of the past, or rather: we will 'read between the lines'.

The act of reading between the lines is governed by several considerations:

1. Exactitude: 'reading between the lines is strictly prohibited in all cases where it would be less exact than not doing so' (p. 30)[11];
2. The validity of the explicit: 'only such reading … as starts from an exact consideration of the explicit statements of the author is legitimate' (p. 30);
3. The interpretative relevance of genre and holistic structure: 'the literary character of the whole work … must be perfectly understood before an interpretation of the statement can reasonably claim to be adequate or even correct' (p. 30)[12];

[11] I am unsure as to how to tell the difference between the respective exactitudes of such readings.

[12] In his respect for the work viewed holistically, Strauss seems to share some of the concerns of the mid-twentieth century American literary movement known as the New Criticism.

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4. Respect for the text: avoidance of deleting a passage or emending the text before full consideration of 'all reasonable possibilities of understanding the passage as it stands' (p. 30)[13];
5. The possibility of the 'ironic': here 'irony' seems to signify saying one thing and intending its opposite[14];
6. The intentionality of the erroneous: 'if a master of the art of writing commits such blunders as would shame an intelligent high school boy, it is reasonable to assume they are intentional, especially if the author discusses, however incidentally, the possibility of intentional blunders in writing' (p. 30)[15];
7. The hermeneutics of ventriloquism: an author's views should not be confused with those of his characters, be it severally or jointly, or with those of his most 'attractive characters' (p. 30);
8. The significance of paucity: 'the real opinion of an author is not necessarily identical with that which he expresses in the largest number of passages' (p. 30).

These considerations (and with the exception of numbers 6 and 8 they are fairly elementary literary critical devices which many scholars make regular use of) are informed by an avowal that tendentiousness (on the part of the reader) is deleterious to exactitude and should be eschewed in favour of 'understanding the thought of the great writers of the past' (p. 30). It is, of course, precisely such tendentiousness which Strauss's critics find his approach most liable to.

Strauss concedes that reading between the lines will not generate consensus, but then historicism has not produced consensus either, for in the very matter of canon-formation or the establishment of an authorial corpus more recent scholars ('the traditionalists' [p. 31]) have been more disinclined to the principle of exclusion than their predecessors ('the higher critics' [p. 31]), who were swayed in their evaluations of change in an author's thought by 'internal evidence' such as 'contradictions or divergences within one book, or between two books by the same author' (p. 31).[16]

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[13] This view, with which I have considerable sympathy, properly requires the historian to work with original manuscripts and codices, and I am not sure how far Strauss adopted this as a practice.

[14] For a discussion of irony and its interpretive possibilities, see James E. Montgomery, 'Jahiz on Jest and Earnest', in *Humor in der arabischen Kultur*, ed. Georges Tamer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 209–239.

[15] This criterion, which draws on criteria 3, 4 and possibly 5, goes beyond merely admitting that Homer nods to asserting that Homer's nods are possibly more meaningful than when he does not nod, which is a position that differs in the significance it places on authorial intentionality from the postmodernist dictum of the uncontrollability of meaning, though what exactly a school boy's blunders are is unclear to me, as is what Strauss would make of the vagaries of textual transmission or scribal errors.

[16] It may be worth comparing Strauss's discussion of reading between the lines with what Yambo, the amnesiac protagonist of Umberto Eco's *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*, trans. Geoffrey Brock (London: Vintage Books, 206 [2004]), pp. 179–180, says of reading the Italian press from the Second World War: 'I could have reconstructed the sequences of actual events simply by reading the Fascist press in the right light, as everyone probably had then.'

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These unfashionable 'higher critics' may have been mistaken in the conclusions which they drew from their readings but they were alive to 'the literary problems involved – obscurity of the plan, contradictions within one work or between two or more works of the same author, omission of important links of the argument, and so on' (p. 31) – in other words, to some of the criteria which should inform any reading 'between the lines.'

There is one vital omission, however: consideration of 'the phenomenon of persecution' (p. 31). Traditional readings ('superficial and doxographic' [p. 31]) 'may reflect the exoteric teaching of the author', whereas the higher criticism is a halfway house, between exoteric and esoteric.

Thus, the burden of Strauss's case in favour of writing (and reading) 'between the lines' centres on persecution: 'so long as we confine ourselves to the view of persecution and the attitude toward freedom of speech and candor which have become prevalent during the last 300 years' (p. 32), we will be unable to understand the 'necessary correlation between persecution and writing between the lines' (p. 32). Indeed, we have even lost our recollection of 'an earlier tendency to read between the lines of the great writers'. And, what is more, we even overlook the 'explicit evidence proving that the author has indicated his views on the most important subjects only between the lines' (though Strauss unfortunately provides no examples) (p. 32).

Strauss does not seem to admit a crucial distinction: reading 'between the lines' does not say anything about the likelihood or even the presence of *writing* 'between the lines' – reading 'between the lines' does not entail the necessity of the presence of writing 'between the lines.' I think that this is a major weakness in Strauss's argument: evidence which we as readers may find to support how we *read* between the lines does not constitute evidence for the presence of *writing* between the lines. In other words, Strauss conflates reading and writing, just as he conflates religion and theology. After all, I can read Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a legal document outlawing regicide but I very much doubt that my reading would entail the conclusion that *Macbeth* was written as a legal document.[17] Strauss makes this conflation because for him reading seems to be an act of discerning, salvaging and restoring a writer's intentions – a perfect equivalence of writer and reader, as was commonly held by the practitioners in the philological tradition.[18] At all events, we as readers may rightly feel entitled to some form of justification in support of such a radical equivalence of

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[17] This is not to be confounded with whether Shakespeare intended *Macbeth* to be a legal document. He may have; we have no way of knowing. I may intend my shopping list to be a poem but it does not make a poem out of my shopping list. An author's intention for a text remains no more than that: one among many possible intentions (however much we may be minded to accord this intention a special privilege).

[18] See the remark of Gadamer: 'the interpreter is absolutely simultaneous with his author. This is the triumph of philological method': Lorenz Krüger, 'Why Do We Study the History of Philosophy?', in *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, eds Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 77–101 (88).

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reading and writing. I will henceforth in my recapitulation of Strauss's argument follow his lead and refer to reading and writing 'between the lines' interchangeably.

In view of this, according to Strauss, necessary correlation, we must draw three inferences:

1. 'The book in question must have been composed in an era of persecution' (p. 32);
2. Persecution is to be defined as the enforcement 'by law or custom of some political or other orthodoxy' (p. 32);
3. A surreptitious or incidental contradiction, by 'an able writer who has a clear mind and a perfect knowledge of the orthodox view and all its ramifications',[19] of one of this orthodoxy's 'necessary presuppositions or consequences which he explicitly … maintains everywhere else' is reasonable warrant for the suspicion 'that he was opposed to the orthodox system as such' (p. 32).

In this case, we must return to the work once more and read it and reread it in line with the guiding principles of reading 'between the lines'.

Part III (pp. 32–37) discusses the phenomena of persecution, 'from the most cruel type, as exemplified by the Spanish Inquisition, to the mildest, which is social ostracism' (p. 32). Between these extremes one encounters 'the types which are most important from the point of view of literary or intellectual history' (p. 32). Societies (or 'periods' as Strauss refers to them [p. 33]) in which these phenomena manifested themselves include the 'comparatively liberal' cases of 'Athens of the fourth and fifth century B.C.… some Muslim countries of the early Middle Ages … seventeenth-century Holland and England, and … eighteenth-century France and Germany' (p. 33).

The role call of the persecuted, as we can read in their biographies (of course, always supposing that these biographies are reliable, trustworthy and accurate and are not the products of mythopoiesis) includes 'Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes', (what has happened to al-Fārābī?) 'Maimonides, Grotius, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Bayle, Wolff, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Lessing and Kant' (p. 33)! 'In some cases, even a glance at the title pages of their books' is testimony to their suffering from 'a kind of persecution … more tangible than social ostracism' (p. 33). Strauss seems to imply that this 'kind of persecution' is not simply 'religious persecution' but 'persecution of free inquiry,' for many periods and societies permitted 'a great variety of kinds of worship' but forbad 'free inquiry' (p. 33). At this point in his argument, I feel entitled to ask of Strauss whether he would allow for any consideration of the dynamics and insecurities of patronage, of the dependencies of thinkers on patrons, in his topography of persecution?

Persecution, however, is not a unilinear process, simply of the compulsion of a philosopher by an orthodoxy. For Strauss, there is a vital element to persecution

[19] Once again it is not clear to me how to identify such a writer, or how I would know what this kind of knowledge would be.

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which is '"considering one's social responsibilities"' (p. 36), which is 'freedom which is not licence' (p. 37), for persecution is the restraint which the philosopher imposes upon himself because he 'presupposes … that freedom of inquiry, and of publication of all results of inquiry, is not guaranteed as a basic right' (p. 36). This is an act of self-preservation and of social conscience.[20] We can also reasonably infer therefore that, if the biography of a philosopher attests that he has been hurt, he has been so because of the unpleasant truths which he must have uttered and thus are justified in looking for truths which might qualify as unpleasant (i.e., looking for the signs of 'writing between the lines') and thereby we exclude from consideration the possibility that a philosopher may have been put on trial, say, or 'persecuted' for any other reason – involvement in a political conspiracy, or a homicide, or an attempt to defraud the state or a failure to pay his taxes.

The Enlightenment (the promoters of 'the republic of universal light' [p. 33]) rejected this type of self-persecution,[21] mistakenly presuming that 'suppression of free inquiry … was accidental, an outcome of the faulty construction of the body politic', which faulty construction could be remedied 'as a result of the progress of popular education' (p. 33).

By 'popular education', Strauss intends the enlightenment of 'an ever-increasing number of people who were not potential philosophers' (p. 34). This transformation of the appropriateness and efficacy of education marks the most significant caesura between Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment philosophers, a foundation of whose anthropology of nature recognised in 'the gulf separating "the wise" and "the vulgar" … a basic fact' (p. 34), a deep pessimism which discerned in the majority of men not only a suspicion but a hatred of philosophy.

So potent and pervasive was this elitist and pessimistic philosophy that, whether they 'had nothing to fear from any particular political quarter' (p. 34) or not, they were 'driven to the conclusion that public communication of the philosophic or scientific truth was impossible or undesirable, not only for the time being but for all times' (p. 34). Such philosophers can only communicate their views to other philosophers, be it in the philosophical circle, or 'by writing about the most important subject[22] by means of "brief indication"' (p. 35). Thus, it transpires, prior to the Enlightenment, self-persecution of this sort was the starting-point of all entextualised philosophical communication which would be compelled to the expression of 'only such opinions as were suitable for the nonphilosophic majority' (p. 35).

However, opinion (*doxa*) is not 'in all respects consonant with truth' and so the pre-modern philosopher must needs have reconciled himself with the telling of

[20] 'There are basic truths which would not be pronounced in public by any decent man, because they would do harm to many people who, having been hurt, would naturally be inclined to hurt in turn him who pronounces the unpleasant truths' (p. 36).

[21] 'An ever-increasing number of heterodox philosophers … published their books not only to communicate their thoughts but also because they desired to contribute to the abolition of persecution as such' (p. 33).

[22] I am unable to determine the significance of the singular, i.e., whether 'the most important subject,' advertises the essential philosophical truth or not.

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449 '"noble lies"' (p. 35), signalling to those in the know that he did not object to such
450 a thing. It is in this attitude to the '"economy of the truth"' that we perceive the
451 thorough and profound similarities between 'the premodern philosopher' and the
452 'premodern poet' (p. 35).[23]

453 Strauss concludes his exposition of 'writing between the lines' by identifying two
454 basic types of philosophical books: the 'exoteric book' which contains 'a popular
455 teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching
456 concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines';
457 and the ventriloquistic text in which 'certain important truths' are stated 'quite openly
458 by using as a mouthpiece some *disreputable* character' (p. 36, my emphasis).[24]

459 There is one further important qualification. These writings are not addressed to the
460 perfect philosopher or to the '*profanum vulgus*' but to 'the potential philosophers' who
461 'are to be led step by step from the popular views which are indispensable for all practical
462 and political purposes to the truth which is merely and purely theoretical' (p. 36). And, in
463 this return to Socrates's discussion with Glaucon in Book Three of *The Republic*, we
464 realise that this philosophical *paideusis* is effected by means of the peculiar yet indica-
465 tive features of 'writing between the lines' (as outlined earlier in the article).

466 The philosopher is thus Hermes the psychopomp and writing and reading
467 'between the lines' his caduceus. Such writings are sublime instances of philosophical
468 philanthropy: as 'exoteric books' they are '"written speeches caused by love"' (p. 36).
469 Their reward is the love which, in surely Strauss's least felicitous phrase, 'the
470 puppies of his race' lavish upon the 'mature philosopher in turn' (p. 36).

471 The final paragraph of the article contains another instance of what I see as Strauss
472 writing in vatic mode. In a qualification of the famous statuary comparison made in
473 the *Symposium* by Alcibiades, 'that outspoken son of outspoken Athens', between
474 the outwardly ugly and inwardly beautiful Socrates (p. 37), Strauss writes:

475 > The works of the great writers of the past are very beautiful even from without. And yet their
476 > visible beauty is sheer ugliness, compared with the beauty of those hidden treasures which
477 > disclose themselves only after very long, never easy, but always pleasant work (p. 37).

478 This always difficult 'but always pleasant work' is what the pre-modern philosophers
479 intend by 'education.' It is not clear to me, alas, how this is an answer to the (rhetorical)
480 question which Strauss poses of the use of 'writing (and perhaps reading) between the
481 lines' 'in a truly liberal society' (p. 36).

482 I find this article very difficult to understand. At times, I confess it leaves me
483 completely at a loss. Let me first defer to some apologists of Strauss who argue that
484 we need also to take into account three features of Strauss's system[25]:

[23] This is an analogy which in many respects I find compelling, though not because of any veracious or verisimilitudinous stance, but because it forces us to reconsider what we might mean by 'philosopher' and 'philosophy' (and by 'poet' and 'poetry').

[24] I am drawn to wonder whether I can infer that for Strauss al-Fārābī presents his Plato as a character disreputable in the eyes of his contemporary Muslim readers?

[25] I have drawn these from my reading of: Steven B. Smith, *Reading Leo Strauss: Politics, Philosophy, Judaism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth about Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

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The Nature of Political Communities

In *Persecution* Strauss revealingly claims that the Enlightenment philosophers who abandoned self-persecution did so because they wanted to reform 'the faulty construction of the body politic', believing, erroneously, that 'suppression of free inquiry, and of publication of the results of free inquiry, was accidental' (p. 33), implying therefore that suppression is somehow an essential feature of political communities. Such communities are predicated upon a preference and need for 'popular views which are indispensable for all practical and political purposes' over 'the truth which is merely and purely theoretical' (p. 36). At the heart of their very fabric is the problem of the reconciliation of 'order which is not oppression with freedom which is not licence' (p. 37). The archetypical political community is Athens at the time of the Trial of Socrates, the consequences of which trial reverberate through all of Strauss's writings on political philosophy.

The Threat of 'Historicism'

Strauss perceived in what he understood as the (epistemological and moral) relativism of Nietzsche as developed by Heidegger the single, most significant and far-reachingly genuine calamity of the twentieth century, an alliance between philosophy and political power which he traced back to Machiavelli, one which distorted the fundamental and seminal antipathy between philosophy as the Socratic quest for the truth (zeteticism) and the structure and ordering of political communities.

The Catastrophe of Modernity

The only antidote to this calamitous development was a Return to the Ancients, in attempt to determine an Edenic or utopian phase when the philosopher practised his subversion and not legitimation of political ideologies, a return which he shared with other twentieth-century philosophers such as Heidegger and Popper.[26]

Such a return illuminated the tension which informs Strauss's intellectual project, the so-called 'theologico-political problem' (or how Jerusalem and Athens could co-exist), the distinction between 'a philosophy which believes it can refute the possibility of revelation – and a philosophy which does not believe

[26] Such a Return to the Ancients has latterly received powerful support from Charles Taylor as a way of doing philosophy: 'Philosophy and its History', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 17–31 and from Quentin Skinner as a vital way of 'enlarging our present horizons instead of fortifying local prejudices': *Visions of Politics, Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 125; see further p. 89 and pp. 125–127. In this point Skinner and Strauss are surprisingly similar.

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that: this is the real meaning of la querelle des anciens et modernes.'[27] It seems that Athens effectively needs Jerusalem, for Jerusalem poses a searching question of philosophy.

This is how Strauss puts it in the Notes to his lecture delivered on January 8, 1948 at Hartford Theological Seminary:

> If there is revelation, philosophy becomes something infinitely unimportant — the *possibility* of revelation implies the *possible meaninglessness* of philosophy. If the possibility of revelation remains an open question, the *significance of philosophy* remains an open question.
>
> Therefore, philosophy stands and falls by the contention that philosophy is the One Thing Needful, or the highest possibility of man. Philosophy cannot claim less: it cannot afford being modest.[28]

Thus revelation is for philosophy what persecution is for the philosopher who resorts to writing: it is somehow their raison d'être, though it is not their task ever to undo revelation or topple persecution, but rather to practice that form of self-persecution which is the mark of the true philosopher.[29]

Such an account, informed by insights into the Straussian system, may allow me to understand why Strauss may think as he does but does not actually help me to decide why I should consider thinking as he does and joining, however notionally, his school, or why I should ever attempt a Straussian reading of a text, let alone what I might stand to gain or benefit from reading a Straussian reading of a text. In other words, why should I bother? But others have and do and this intrigues me, so let me make some observations.

Firstly, Strauss's theory is predicated, as is so common in the history of philosophy, upon a profound conviction in the hermeneutical viability of intentionalism, that an author's intentions can be recovered from a text and are thus the only way properly to read such a text; his notion of authorship is correspondingly strong – the author is the owner of the ideas in the work, is the guarantor of how to read them, is the authority to which we as readers must defer.

Secondly, our job as readers is to salvage the author's original meanings. We achieve this through close reading not only of the word or passage but also and simultaneously of the text conceived as a whole (a feature of his approach which is consonant with the New Criticism, though it had little truck with what it demonised as the intentionalist fallacy).

Thirdly, the text thus approached *must* be a whole, *must* be the holistic presentation of the author's intentions. Of course, in this case, when we detect that we are reading a work written 'between the lines', an author's intentions will not merely be what is left out of the text, or even what is left unsaid, but are to be determined from a set of textual clues around which the text will be structured.

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[27] See Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, trans. Marcus Brainard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 5 and p. 177.

[28] Meier, *Leo Strauss*, p. 175; see pp. 22–23.

[29] See Strauss's letters voicing his concerns over his reading of Maimonides in Meier, *Leo Strauss*, pp. 23–24, n. 32.

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Such a theory of authorship and readership, for this is what it really amounts to in my understanding of it, hinges upon a number of suppositions.

Firstly, the true philosopher-author is, like the truth which Strauss intimates that he has acquired, eternal and universal, atemporal and transcultural.

Secondly, persecution, as both external and internal compulsion, is also eternal and universal – it is the necessary counterpart of the acquisition of the truth: the price which the philosopher has to pay when he is given entry to the Garden of Eden.

Thirdly, the text which we have before us today must be an exact and faithful replica of the philosopher's autograph, for if we lay such interpretive emphasis on contradictions, blunders and inconsistencies (as indicants of genuine authorial intent), they simply cannot be attributable to the vagaries of the text's transmission or the ignorances of a scribe or the insertions of a reader: the text must somehow then be, like the philosopher and the truth, though perhaps to a lesser extent, beyond the reach of time.

Fourthly, as the reader of this quasi-miraculous or mythical artefact is effectively a cryptologist, the 'code-breaking' techniques which we bring to bear on the text must also, in their transcultural atemporality, resemble the philosopher, the truth and their text, and our acquisition of them as readers must somehow be integral to the process of our growth as potential philosophers.

And yet, surely Strauss's insight into these verities is through contemplating the writings of the Ancients and I cannot see how he can acquire knowledge of these cryptological techniques unless it be through what he himself rejects (*Persecution*, p. 7) as the 'sociology of knowledge', i.e., the concern 'with the relation of different types of thought to different types of society'. If I have understood him properly, his hermeneutical project hinges, then, in a real sense, on the very approach which he rejects: the ideology of 'historicism'.

Whether we think that all of this is likely or not will be a matter of conviction. I do not share the conviction that the history of philosophy or literature is thus: I am simply unable to read texts according to *all* of these rules. But, as I have said, many others can and do and I find this intriguing. Why do they do so? Before I consider this, I want turn to some of the critics of Strauss and Straussianism (Oliver Leaman, Dimitri Gutas and Quentin Skinner), and remark on what I take to be the fifth peculiar, perplexing and confusing feature of this phenomenon – that Straussianism rather than Strauss has attracted the lion's share of critical engagement.

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Oliver Leaman

Leaman, who was not (in his works from 1980 to 1985 at least) antipathetical to the Straussian project, is nonetheless a critic of the enthusiasms of what he calls 'the esoteric interpretation.' He notes, for example, that to neglect consideration of how 'the *falāsifa* … speak of the importance of concealing dangerous doctrines and presenting their ideas in such a way that they will not disturb the faith of the masses

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or the suspicions of the theologians' would be to 'miss a great deal of significance,' declaring that 'the argument throughout this study is not opposed to the esoteric interpretation as such', for it 'provides a methodological paradigm in terms of which samples of philosophy are to be studied and analysed.'[30]

As it is the *Faṣl al-maqāl* of Ibn Rushd which Leaman next proceeds to discuss, it is not unreasonable to assume that this textual *fatwā* on how *ḥikma* (philosophical sagacity) intersects with *sharī'a* (revealed law) is uppermost in his mind. He notes that these texts raise a major problem – 'with writing' for writing itself is 'indiscriminate and so unsatisfactory' (p. 188), and cannot 'duplicate the sorts of controls and safeguards they could apply to their oral teaching' (p. 188), though it has rarely seemed to occur to scholars apart from Strauss to wonder why, if writing is so indiscriminate and came so fraught with dangers, any would-be philosopher would even consider putting pen to paper and not simply confining himself to the oral quest for the truth. Strauss's answer, you will remember, is ingenious: it is to attract potential philosophers to the great vocation; and self-persecution is ever present to the true philosopher.

Of course, some philosophical texts may, as is often held of many of Aristotle's works, be lecture-notes taken by or written for students, or in the early ʿAbbāsid context, be what Gregor Schoeler calls 'school texts', books written for the school for use within the school, texts which are subsequently disseminated outwith the confines of the school. Many of the works of al-Fārābī strike me as being of this kind: not fully 'published' works (in the sense of works carefully written as books and edited and released for consumption beyond the confines of the school).

Leaman's explanation is representative of the account which many scholars have offered for this conundrum, when he posits a distinction 'between the claims the *falāsifa* make in their popular works and the claims they make in works unlikely to have been of much interest to the general public' (p. 189).[31] But what on earth do we imagine a 'general public' to have been in the caliph al-Muqtadir's Baghdad of al-Fārābī's day or in the Almohad Spain of Ibn Rushd (unless by 'general public' we mean the Baghdadi Ḥanābila, for example, or the Mālikī *fuqahā'* of twelfth-century al-Andalus)? And I would not know how to distinguish in this context between a work for the general reader and one for the specialist, for this is not the same as to make a distinction between curricular and non-curricular works. But the original observation remains. The question is not why some thinkers adopted this strategy for presenting their ideas but what it means in the context of any given treatise for these

[30] Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 186 and p. 187.

[31] Incidentally, the text from *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* concerning the inconsistent position of al-Fārābī on the afterlife to which Leaman refers (*Introduction*, p. 188) does not make this distinction at all; Ibn Ṭufayl's artistry in the *muqaddima* to this work is at its most disingenuous in misdirecting his readers in his quest to deprive *falsafa* of ultimate authority in giving adequate accounts of existence. Thus, for example, Gutas has demonstrated the unreliability of the quotations from Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl presumably treats al-Fārābī no differently from Ibn Sīnā: see Dimitri Gutas, 'Ibn Ṭufayl on Ibn Sīnā's Eastern Philosophy', *Oriens*, 34 (1994), 222–241.

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ideas to be presented in this manner. (This point is resumed in the discussion of Gutas's arguments on pp. @@–@@ below).

[AU2]

There are two distortions which the esoteric interpretation introduces in modern approaches to what Leaman identifies as Islamic philosophy:

1. the claim 'that the conflict between religion and philosophy is of *overriding* importance to the construction of Islamic philosophy and all the arguments within that philosophy' (p. 186);
2. 'the approach which Strauss advocates places the entire emphasis upon the historical aspects of Islamic philosophy', so much so that 'it is as though the philosophy itself is not worth considering as philosophy.'[32]

In a subsequent publication, Leaman discerns in this last point an 'Orientalist' assumption 'that Islamic philosophy should not be regarded as philosophy primarily.'[33] While this may represent a hardening of his views over a decade and a half, it is consistent with his appeal to look to the arguments, 'picking out interesting points and judging the strength or otherwise of the reasoning process' which philosophical texts contain (p. 182) – that it is the 'philosophical arguments themselves' (p. 199) that we must understand.[34]

Thus, what for Strauss was the means to gain access to the presentation, however nebulous, however propaideutic, however hortatory, of at least the intimations of eternal verities by true philosophers (i.e., reading 'between the lines') becomes for Leaman a gross distortion of the essence of philosophy. That Leaman's vision of philosophy as argumentative cherry-picking may not be consistent with what various Muslim societies and diverse intellectuals living in those societies (not exclusively Muslim, of course) have understood as *falsafa* seems irrelevant, despite the attention he pays in other publications 'to define the precise nature of Islamic philosophy'.[35] What one expects to find as philosophy is, as Leaman of course is well aware, what one will find as philosophy: what the philosopher, in Quentin Skinner's words, 'is *set* to expect'. Leaman's response to Strauss, then, raises the ever-present spectre of how we identify which writings of the past are philosophical and how we read them.

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[32] Leaman does not remark on the force of this paradox for Strauss who was, as we have seen, so professedly antipathetical to the historical aspects of all philosophy.

[33] Oliver Leaman, 'Orientalism and Islamic Philosophy', in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1996), II, pp. 1143–1148 (1145).

[34] See further Richard Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 49–75 ('historical reconstruction… and rational reconstruction' 'should be seen as two moments in a continuing movement around the hermeneutic circle' [p. 53]); Bruce Kuklick, 'Seven Thinkers and How They Grew: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz; Locke, Berkeley, Hume; Kant', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 125–139 (137, n. 13).

[35] Oliver Leaman, *A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 13–22 (13).

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Dimitri Gutas

Dimitri Gutas has been one of the most persistent and outspoken opponents of the 'political approach' typical of the Straussians. For him, the issue is not merely *how* to read, but whether, in view of our current state of knowledge, we are in a position to read the philosophical writings of the past, without first concentrating on their edition, translation and study.

Such an enterprise also involves the archaeology of these texts, where appropriate, as, for example, is the case with al-Fārābī's adoption, in his treatise *What Must Precede the Learning of Aristotle's Philosophy*, of 'the formulation,' typical of 'Alexandrian Aristotelianism,' 'of the doctrine that Aristotle deliberately cultivated obscurity in his works'[36] in order to test and train the student and to 'prevent the squandering of philosophy.'[37] It then becomes imperative for us to read at least this treatise as such an exercise.

Gutas notes that Strauss infers from his reading of Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* a set of positions which he posited as 'valid for all Arabic philosophy,'[38] misunderstanding and misrepresenting what Gutas elsewhere refers to as the 'withholding of knowledge'[39] and misconstruing in the process al-Fārābī's attitudes to 'theology as a science' (I would prefer to say the truth claims of the theologians) and to religion in general, which are most definitely not of overriding importance for him. At the heart of it all, according to Gutas, lies 'the orientalist notion that all of Arabic philosophy is about the conflict between religion and philosophy,'[40] pointing to the inadequacy of this as a description of the religious neutrality of their writings on logic and physics.[41]

In his discussion of the Arabic branch of the Straussians, Gutas discerns in this theory of persecution two 'major negative consequences' (p. 21):

1. 'A hermeneutical libertarianism, or arbitrariness' of reading, with a concomitant abandonment of 'even the most elementary rules of philological and historical research' (noting that this sort of approach presumes that 'the Arabic philosophers had recourse to the same Greek texts of Plato and Aristotle as ours');

[36] Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 226–227.

[37] Gutas, *Avicenna*, p. 227, n. 13: *li-kay lā tubdhala al-falsafa*.

[38] Dimitri Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29 (2002), pp. 5–25 (19).

[39] Gutas, *Avicenna*, pp. 225–234.

[40] 'The Study', p. 20. See also the comment on p. 22: 'the biased orientalist attitude that philosophy could not thrive in "Islam" because of the intrinsically anti-rationalist nature of the latter.'

[41] Though we have seen earlier that Strauss can be quite coy about which texts to read between the lines, some of his acolytes, such as Charles Butterworth, have been less circumspect: see, e.g., Leaman's discussion of Butterworth's 1977 study of three of Ibn Rushd's short commentaries (on the *Topics*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*): *Introduction*, pp. 192–194; and the reviews of Butterworth's 1986 study of Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on the *Poetics* by John Mattock in *The Classical Review*, 37 (1989), pp. 332–333 and Dimitri Gutas in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110 (1990), pp. 92–101.

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2. an arrogant elitism which such libertarian reading between the lines bestows upon its keeper.

In consequence, 'all Arabic philosophy until Averroes is seen as having a political framework' – as being 'in essence, political philosophy' (p. 22). For Gutas,

> There is no political philosophy as such in Arabic, as the term is normally understood, before Ibn Khald n … no independent field of study within Arabic philosophy which investigates political agents, constituencies, and institutions as autonomous elements that operate according to their own dynamic within the structure of the society.[42]

Irrespective of the implications which such a view might have for texts outwith the Arabic tradition, say, Plato's *Republic*,[43] Gutas is right to point to the poverty of the evidence which the Arabic Straussians are able to muster, and their willingness to cede the post-classical period to 'Islamic mysticism'[44] is an indictment of the restrictions which their approach imposes upon them.

But let me state that this is in some ways a distortion of what I think is Strauss's own position, which was that philosophy, because of the deleterious effects on civic order which its verities would have were they to be bruited abroad, was political *malgré lui*, as it were. It is not that all philosophy is relentlessly, exclusively and self-avowedly political in interest and orientation but that it could not be anything but political the moment it becomes entextualised.

In a footnote to his discussion of 'hermeneutical libertarianism', Gutas makes one vital and abiding remark which I will resume presently and so I will quote it almost in full:

> The literary pathology of overinterpretation, where interpretation has no uniform criteria, is analysed by Umberto Eco … who brings out its paranoiacal and obsessive nature … Though Eco makes no reference to Strauss, his analyses are significant for placing the Straussian enterprise both within a historically recognizable tradition and an ideological framework.[45]

Once again, the spectre of how we identify which writings of the past are philosophical and how we read them haunts our discussion.

Quentin Skinner

In his survey of principal trends in the history of ideas, Quentin Skinner identifies two predominant mythologies which are predicated upon the predisposition or expectations of the historian: the mythology of doctrines; the mythology of coherence.[46]

[42] Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century', p. 23.

[43] Cf. G. R. F Ferrari's 'Introduction' to Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. xi–xxxi, especially pp. xxii–xxv.

[44] See the comment of Muhsin Mahdi, quoted by Gutas, 'The Study', p. 23.

[45] Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century', p. 21.

[46] Skinner, *Visions*, pp. 59–72.

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The mythology of doctrines comes in two principal articulations, each of which centres upon how to position any given theorist or writer with relation to those ideas or doctrines which are thought to be constitutive of the discipline within which the writer is operating. The positive version will take 'some scattered or incidental remarks by one of the classic theorists for their "doctrine" on one of the themes which the historian is *set* to expect' (*Visions*, p. 64). The negative approach, which is the approach of Strauss, will note that the classic theorist has failed 'to come up with a recognisable doctrine on one of the mandatory themes' (*Visions*, p. 64). Skinner then proceeds to discuss *in nuce* Strauss's 'belief in the desirability of resolving antinomies' (*Visions*, p. 71), or the phenomenon of persecution. He notes that it hinges upon 'two *a priori* assumptions':

1. Strauss assumes that 'to be original *is* to be subversive,' for originality as subversion is 'the means by which we know in which texts to look for doctrines between the lines' (*Visions*, p. 72);
2. insulation from criticism – 'to fail to "see" the message between the lines *is* to be thoughtless, while to "see" it is to be trustworthy and intelligent' (*Visions*, p. 72).

Skinner also remarks upon the unverifiability of identification of a period of persecution, an identification which Strauss himself refers to in his plea for historical exactitude, for a period of persecution is one in which there will be writing 'between the lines', while we identify texts written 'between the lines' as indicants of a period of persecution. And as we have seen above, Strauss's argument that self-persecution is somehow a perduring feature of pre-Enlightenment philosophical writing renders the phenomenon even less verifiable.

The Synopsis of 'Farabi's Plato'

I wish now to consider further Gutas's remark (quoted above on p. @@) concerning Eco's concept of overinterpretation, for if the proof of the pudding is in the tasting, and if we, as readers and thinkers, are in any way sympathetic (as I am) to a reading of a text which 'consists of pursuing questions that the text does not pose to its model reader' (in Jonathan Culler's formulation),[47] then we might want to consider an Arabic text (in this instance, al-Fārābī's *Falsafat Aflāṭun*) and its reading by Strauss ('Farabi's Plato'). It has not proved possible for me in the present chapter to offer a close reading of al-Fārābī's text and so I shall attempt half the task by limiting myself to Strauss's synopsis of his study.

For Miles Burnyeat, to be sure, any enterprise to rehabilitate Strauss's way of reading Plato is doomed. It is from al-Fārābī that Burnyeat thinks Strauss 'apparently

[47] Jonathan Culler, 'In Defence of Overinterpretation', in Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 109–124 (114).

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learned' 'to show in detail that Plato meant the opposite of what Socrates says' by means of the technique which he characterises as follows:

> You paraphrase the text in tedious detail – or so it appears to the uninitiated reader. Occasionally you remark that a certain statement is not clear; you note that the text is silent about a certain matter; you wonder whether such and such can really be the case. With a series of barely perceptible nudges you gradually insinuate that the text is insinuating something quite different from what the words say. Strauss's description of Farabi describes himself: There is a great divergence between what Farabi explicitly says and what Plato explicitly says; it is frequently impossible to say where Farabi's alleged report of Plato's view ends and his own exposition begins.[48]

I hope, Burnyeat's trenchant critique notwithstanding, to be in a position at least to rehabilitate a text by al-Fārābī. Can reflecting upon Strauss's Farabi and Plato somehow enable us to cultivate an excess of wonder in our reading of *Falsafat Aflāṭun*?

Strauss and the Philosophy of Plato

In view of the centrality of Plato in his vision of philosophy, Strauss was naturally drawn to al-Fārābī's two treatises on Plato: *Falsafat Aflāṭun wa-ajzā'ihā wa-marātib ajzā'ihā min awwalihā ilā ākhirihā*, *The Philosophy of Plato, its Parts and the Dispositions of its Parts from their First to their Last*; and *Plato's Laws*.

Strauss devoted two articles to these texts which had recently been edited and made available in Latin translations[49]: 'Farabi's *Plato*' (from the Ginzberg volume in 1945) and 'How Farabi Read Plato's *Laws*' (first published in 1957 and available in *What is Political Philosophy?*, pp. 134–154). Strauss provided a synopsis of the first of these articles as part of the 'Introduction' to his volume *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, pp. 7–22 (pp. 9–19), which is the version I will discuss. In Strauss's hands, *The Philosophy of Plato* becomes a manifesto of *falsafa*. It is thus Hiram's key not only to al-Fārābī's understanding of Plato but for all philosophical activity in Arabic:

Uncorrected Proof

[48] Miles Burnyeat, 'Sphinx without a Secret' (Review of *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* by Leo Strauss), *New York Review of Books*, 32/9 (May 30, 1985), pp. 30–36 (35).

[49] Al-Fārābī, *De Platonis philosophia*, eds and trans. Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer (London: The Warburg Institute, 1943); Al-Fārābī, *Compendium Legum Platonis*, ed. and trans. Francesco Gabrieli (London: The Warburg Institute, 1952) respectively. Compare the Straussian reading of this latter work by Joshua Parens, *Metaphysics as Rhetoric: Alfarabi's Summary of Plato's Laws* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) and the source-critical study by Dimitri Gutas, 'Galen's *Synopsis* of Plato's *Laws* and Fārābī's *Talḫīṣ*', in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences Dedicated to H. J. Drossaart Lulofs on his Ninetieth Birthday*, eds Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1997), pp. 101–119 (= Article V in Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition* [Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2000]).

Editor's Proof

> What Fārābī regarded as the purpose of the two philosophers … appears with all the clarity which one can reasonably desire, from his summary of Plato's philosophy … This purpose is likely to prove the latent purpose of all *falāsifa* proper. Fārābī's *Plato* would thus prove to be the clue par excellence to the *falsafa* as such.[50]

And because al-Fārābī and Strauss are engaged in the same activity, true philosophy, we can overlook the slippage in Strauss's argument from establishing al-Fārābī's 'purpose' to promoting Strauss's vision. Although he does not explicitly acknowledge the uniqueness of al-Fārābī's treatise on Plato, Strauss does acknowledge that his reconstruction of these intentions is based on works by 'men like Yehuda Halevi and Maimonides' (*Persecution*, p. 11), whose interpretations are confirmed by 'at least some writings of Fārābī' (*Persecution*, p. 11). And although he explicitly promotes the representativeness of this Fārābian vision, he also acknowledges that 'it is impossible to say to what extent Fārābī's successors accepted his views in regard to the crucial point' (*Persecution*, p. 11).

Strauss begins his reading from the observation that *The Philosophy of Plato* is the second treatise in a tripartite composition (I am ignorant of the manuscriptural authority for this allegation, which is widely voiced in secondary studies): the first is the *Taḥṣīl al-saʿāda*, *The Realisation of Felicity*, while the concluding treatise is devoted to the philosophy of Aristotle (this work was not available in edited format when Strauss was writing).

The first work provides Strauss with three clues: 'the chief requirement' 'for bringing about the complete happiness of nations and of cities' is 'the rule of philosophers' (*Persecution*, p. 12); Plato and Aristotle have given us the methods for attaining philosophy 'after it has been blurred or destroyed' (*Persecution*, p. 12); 'the purpose of Plato and Aristotle was one and the same' (*Persecution*, p. 12).

He next summarises the treatise. It is concerned with happiness as perfection. This happiness consists in 'the science of the essence of every being,' i.e., philosophy. The lifestyle which leads to it is 'the royal or political art', for 'the philosopher and the king prove to be identical' and there is nothing 'higher in rank than philosophy' (*Persecution*, pp. 12–13). Thus philosophy nullifies revealed religion, for this philosophy is pagan philosophy and so al-Fārābi's vision is not confined to Islam. Plato is al-Fārābī's ventriloquist's dummy and he passes a damning 'verdict' on the 'cognitive value' of 'the religious knowledge available' in both their times (*Persecution*, p. 13).

Furthermore, *The Philosophy of Plato*, despite discussing the relevant Platonic dialogues in which 'the immortality of the soul' features, makes no mention of the distinction made in the *Taḥṣīl* 'between "the happiness of this world in this life" and "the ultimate happiness in the other life"' (*Persecution*, p. 13) and so 'Fārābī's Plato silently rejects Plato's doctrine of a life after death' (*Persecution*, p. 13). He is

[50] Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p. 12. See ibid., p. 17: 'Fārābī's remarks on Plato's policy define the general character of the activity of the *falāsifa*.' It is unclear whether this definition is valid for the *falāsifa* themselves or for Strauss's vision of al-Fārābī's vision of the *falāsifa*, though the distinction will be nugatory if we agree that all parties involved are engaged in the same enterprise.

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empowered to take such a bold and dangerous step because *The Philosophy* is 'the least exposed and the shortest part of a larger work' (i.e., it is the second instalment of what Strauss identifies as a trilogy) and because 'it sets forth explicitly the views of another man' (*Persecution*, p. 14).

Strauss then compares the idiosyncrasy of the *Plato* with the 'orthodox views' and the 'tolerable' 'if heretical' views expressed 'in works in which he speaks in his own name' (*Persecution*, p. 14) and proposes that al-Fārābī takes advantage of 'the specific immunity of the commentator or of the historian' in order to address 'grave matters in his "historical" works' rather than those in his own name.

Viewed thus, this silent omission by al-Fārābī becomes so pregnant with significance and so momentous that it undermines the representativeness, in terms of al-Fārābī's *true* philosophical views, of his other statements in support of the immortality of the soul, which 'must be regarded as accommodations to the accepted views' (*Persecution*, p. 15).

Strauss now turns his attention to politics, for although the *Plato* discusses the identity of the philosopher and the king, al-Fārābī does not mention the law-giver.[51] It is therefore in the light of this absence (I think I am correct in drawing this conclusion) 'not religion or Revelation but politics, if Platonic politics' which is required and in so doing, al-Fārābī initiates 'the tradition whose most famous representatives in the West are Marsilius of Padua and Machiavelli' (*Persecution*, p. 15). Rejection of the immortal soul is a prelude to the call for 'the virtuous city … midway between this world and the other world … existing not "in deed" but "in speech"' (*Persecution*, p. 15).

Is it necessary for such a city to exist in actuality? Strauss thinks that al-Fārābī understood Plato and Aristotle as thinking not. He reaches this conclusion through consideration of a distinction made by al-Fārābī 'between Socrates's investigations and Plato's investigations', between the Socratic emphasis on justice and the virtues' and the Platonic emphasis on 'the science of the divine and of the natural things' (*Persecution*, p. 16). These different emphases represent the crucial distinction of the choices both thinkers made when confronted with persecution: Socrates chose death through non-conformity; Plato elected to found 'the virtuous city in speech' (p. 16).

At this point in the text there occurs another epiphany, in the form of a repetition, for according to al-Fārābī, 'Plato "repeated" his account of the way of Socrates and he "repeated" the mention of the vulgar of the cities and nations' (*Persecution*, p. 16), the import of which is that we should understand al-Fārābī as interpreting Plato as maintaining that the way of Socrates is fit for the philosopher's congress with the elite, the way of Thrasymachus necessary for his engagement with the vulgar. No need, then, to revolutionise the city. Instead what is proposed is a programme of gradual education (the 'replacement of the accepted opinions by the truth or an approximation

[51] We must remember that for Strauss 'revelation as understood by Jews and Muslims has the character of Law' and thus was 'a social order, if an all-comprehensive order, which regulates not merely actions but thoughts or opinions as well' (*Persecution*, pp. 9–10), i.e., it is a temporal and cultural zone of persecution. This seems to have led him to overlook the references to the *wāḍi' al-nawāmīs* at *Philosophy of Plato*, VII, § 29, p. 21, l. 12 and VII, § 30, p. 22, l. 6–7.

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to the truth') and the humanisation of 'an imperfect society', or the replacement by al-Fārābī's Plato of

> the philosopher-king who rules openly in the virtuous city, by the secret kingship of the philosopher who, being "a perfect man" precisely because he is an "investigator," lives privately as a member of an imperfect society.[52]

His abbreviated reading of the treatise now complete, it is time for Strauss to draw some conclusions:

1. We should not confound the 'teaching of the *falāsifa* with what they taught most frequently or most conspicuously.'
2. The 'philosophic distinction between the exoteric and the esoteric teaching' was, *The Philosophy of Plato* reminds us, because 'philosophy and the philosophers were in "grave danger" … There was no harmony between philosophy and society' (p. 17).
3. 'The exoteric teaching was needed for protecting philosophy' (p. 18); it was thus 'political'; 'Fārābī presented the whole of philosophy within a political framework.'
4. There is an intimation of the exoteric-esoteric distinction in the title which Averroes gave to al-Fārābī's 'tripartite' composition (see also *Persecution*, p. 11).
5. The 'Neo-Platonism of the *falāsifa*' may represent their exoteric teaching because (?) 'Fārābī's *Plato* shows no trace whatever of Neo-Platonic influence' (p. 18).[53]
6. The freedom of philosophy in al-Fārābī's day was even more parlous than in Plato's 'after "philosophy had been blurred or destroyed";' this parlous nature of philosophy in the Islamic world, its incommensurability with 'the legal interpretation of the Divine Law (*Talmud* or *fiqh*) … explains partly the eventual collapse of philosophic inquiry in the Islamic and in the Jewish world' (p. 19).

This is heady stuff. As a reader I am swept up by Strauss into the maelstrom of events of an apocalyptic dimension. The very fate of philosophy is decided in this short treatise by al-Fārābī (no more than 5,000 words long), an unusual composition by a textually unusual if vitally important Arabic-Islamic philosopher of fourth/tenth century Baghdad.

I am flattered that this aspect of the tradition in which I am interested is of a cosmic significance but I am confused by the argumentative tergiversations of Strauss's interpretation: when is a repetition not simply an error?; when is a silence not the result of ignorance?; what evidence could we provide to corroborate the contention that these treatises were composed according to this structural principle (i.e., as a trilogy, the second item of which is the cherished locus of enhanced philosophical freedom)?; how did al-Fārābī gain such an intimate and such a specialised knowledge of Platonic philosophy, one which, even with the whole Platonic corpus

[52] Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, p. 17.

[53] This last inference (on the exotericism of the Neoplatonism of the *falāsifa*) is entirely conjectural on my part.

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at my disposal, in scientific editions and carefully crafted translations and meticulously argued analyses, I know I could never hope to emulate, let alone achieve?

Before proceeding, let me note that in his promotion of ventriloquism and his insistence that these texts dissemble, Strauss has emphasised cultural and intellectual phenomena which I think are of far-reaching significance for the ways in which ninth- and tenth-century intellectuals presented their ideas in Arabic.

Excessive Wonder or Overinterpretation?

In a spirit of constructive criticism, it is worth pausing to reflect more fully on whether we would prefer to defend Strauss's reading as an instance of excessive interpretation ('overstanding'), or condemn it, with Gutas, as overinterpretation.

Is it the task of the reader, the philosopher, critic or literary theorist, to remove the 'excess of wonder' which Eco thinks 'leads to overestimating the importance of coincidences which are explainable in other ways' (*Interpretation*, p. 50)? Or do we think, with Culler, that 'it would be sad indeed if fear of "overinterpretation" should lead us to avoid or repress the state of wonder at the play of texts and interpretation' (*Interpretation*, p. 123)?[54] In other words, do Strauss's readings of al-Fārābī arouse in us a sense of wonder at the play of his texts?

Before we are in a position to consider these questions, we must think about the distinction drawn by Wayne Booth between 'understanding' and 'overstanding' and first briefly rehearse the stances of Eco and Culler as they may apply to Strauss's reading of *The Philosophy of Plato*.

The second of Umberto Eco's published Tanner Lectures delivered at Clare Hall in the University of Cambridge in 1990 is 'Overinterpreting Texts' (*Interpretation*, pp. 45–66). It is a characteristically erudite and witty review of a tendency in textual interpretation which Eco christens 'Hermetic semiosis' – a poetics of suspicion based on the overestimation of clues and signs informed by an indiscriminate criterion of similarity, with a pronounced predilection for passing from 'sign to semiosis' with no more warrant than the presence of similarity. Eco proposes instead that the 'text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader' noting that 'the empirical reader is only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text' (*Interpretation*, p. 64). Jonathan Culler ('In Defence of Overinterpretation', in Eco, *Interpretation*, pp. 109–124) is unhappy about Eco's condemnation of the term 'overinterpretation' and promotes the notion of 'overstanding' as developed by Wayne C. Booth in his *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism*.[55]

[54] My sympathies in the present essay lie with Culler, though in a companion piece I have promoted the Econian dialectic of *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris*: James E. Montgomery, 'Abū Nuwās, the Justified Sinner?', *Oriens* 39 (2011), pp. 75–164.

[55] Wayne C. Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

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Booth's book began as a set of seminar presentations, the Christian Gauss Seminars held in Princeton during 1974. It is a book of criticism of criticism of criticism, arguing for a critical pluralism based on engagement and community, deeply informed by a pragmatist ethic. One can quickly get a flavour of both its author's style and forthrightness from his 'A Hippocratic Oath for the Pluralist', with comments such as, 'I will publish nothing, favourable or unfavourable, about books or articles I have not read through at least once'; 'I will *try* to publish nothing about any book or article until … I have reason to think that I can give an account of it that the author himself will recognise as just'; 'I will take no critic's word, when he discusses other critics, unless he can convince me that he has abided by the first two ordinances.'[56]

A central feature of Booth's book, which I have found useful in thinking about al-Fārābī and how Strauss reads him, is his distinction between '*under*standing' and '*over*standing'.[57] I have italicised the prepositions because they provide the easiest way to perceive the points which I want to appropriate from Booth's argument. In 'understanding' the text stands over us as readers. Its world dominates us from a position of superiority. It insists that we as readers respond to questions it asks of us and provide answers to those questions.[58] These questions differ, of course, from text to text: 'the boundaries of "appropriateness" are invariably set by the text'; and as readers we will 'infer different boundaries … of appropriate questions.' Note however that

> About what we might call the text's central preoccupations there is an astonishing agreement among us all.[59]

The example which Booth gives is Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, stressing that 'the amount of information about *Coriolanus* shared by all serious critics, regardless of their theories, is staggering.' (p. 244). 'Understanding' therefore is predicated upon a consensus about a given work and the data which relate to it (pp. 244–249).

(Of course in the case of many of al-Fārābī's texts, and of so many other Arabic texts from the ninth and tenth centuries, we simply do not have access to this data and information, or often the data and information which we do have access to can be shown to be produced by readers within the tradition responding to uncertainties about the demands of the text just as we are. Thus we are rarely in a position to imply that 'we know everything that is undeniable about the work' [p. 245]. There is often precious little data which could form the basis of such a consensus, as, to take one example among many, anyone who is familiar with the debates about al-Shāfiʿī's *Risāla* over the last three decades will readily agree.)

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[56] Ibid., pp. 351–352.

[57] I do not follow Booth's definition of 'understanding' as 'the goal, process, and result whenever one mind succeeds in entering another mind' (p. 262), largely because I am unsure how to recognise when this might happen to me.

[58] Booth, *Critical Understanding*, pp. 238–242.

[59] Ibid., p. 241.

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'*Over*standing' is that moment when we as readers turn the tables on the text and position ourselves above the text in a moment of authority and refuse to be constrained by the questions which the text demands of us. It is, according to Booth, a 'violation of the text's demands' (p. 255), actuated by the process of question and response which we engaged in when seeking to understand the text.[60]

(To be sure, I would argue in a different forum that the distinction between understanding and overstanding is artificial, despite the clarity which Booth allows us from his discussion of the process. Understanding and overstanding are, for me, both aspects of the same process: that of seeking to respect a text, in full knowledge that often the questions which a text seems to demand of me are questions which my reading of other texts has impelled me to discern as appropriate. So too the 'success' or 'tendentiousness' of my under/overstanding is often unclear to me. I look to my colleagues and the discipline to which I belong to pass verdict on their success or failure. My reading is limited by my ability to engage with the text and the suasiveness of my reading by my capacity for doing a good job in presenting my engagement; the limitations of my reading are determined by the community to which I belong.)

A characteristic feature of 'overstanding' therefore is that it pursues 'questions that the text does not pose to its model reader' (Culler, 'In Defence', p. 114), asking 'not what the work has in mind but what it forgets, not what it says but what it takes for granted' ('In Defence', p. 115). It is here that we encounter a major obstacle to a possible defence of Strauss's hermeneutic in terms of Culler's plea for overstanding, because Strauss's interpretation pursues questions which he thinks the text poses to its model reader and conceals from its ordinary reader, pointing the model reader to what it takes for granted and what it encourages the ordinary reader not to notice.

Now, rather than opening up the text, say in the ways in which Roland Barthes opened up Balzac or Michelet, Strauss seeks to control and determine the totalization of textual meaning by reconstructing the intention of the text, which is for him synonymous with the intention of the author. Overstanding, according to Culler, ought to encourage puzzlement over the features of a text which 'seem to resist the totalization of meaning' and 'those about which there might initially seem to be nothing to say' ('In Defence', p. 122).

Thus I would expect Strauss might from the very start be inclined to reject a defence of his reading of the text as overstanding, preferring instead to insist that it is understanding. And I suspect that his approach is essentially a pontifical discipline (one which presumes 'to pontificate explicitly on the methods appropriate to

[60] As with 'understanding' there are features of Booth's notion of 'overstanding' about which I am unsure, as when he holds that 'just "violations" will be those that are based on a prior act of understanding, and understanding will lead to deliberate violation when justice requires it' (p. 259). My lack of comfort with this statement is connected with my comments about 'data': when it comes to so many Arabic texts from the period, there is no possibility of the kind of consensus that would make any such shared notion of 'justice' feasible.

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inquiry'),[61] masquerading as a divinatory discipline (one which is driven by a deciphering of signs).[62]

Overstanding can be a critical response to what Culler notes is the hermeneutic crisis which occurs when a text challenges 'the conceptual framework with which one attempts to interpret it' ('In Defence', p. 109).[63] Strauss developed his interpretative framework from a reading of Maimonides and applied it to al-Fārābī. I can discern no evidence of any challenge posed by *The Philosophy of Plato* to Strauss's theory of writing and/or reading between the lines. Quite the opposite – Strauss argues that the treatise is a perfect example of its dynamic. Indeed, in a very real sense, he uses his framework to challenge al-Fārābī's text.

Culler argues, and Booth would agree to a limited extent, that 'interpretation is interesting only when it is extreme' ('In Defence', p. 110). Strauss's reading is certainly extreme and I do find it intriguing. When extreme, according to Culler, such readings 'have a better chance of bringing to light connections or implications not previously noticed or reflected on than if they strive to remain "sound" or moderate' ('In Defence', p. 110). Let me repeat: ventriloquism and dissemblance are two such features brought to light by Strauss's reading.

Strauss's hermeneutic certainly brings to light other connections and implications not previously noticed, by modern readers that is, not by ancient philosophers, though the connections are often unsubstantiated (some of his critics, I am sure, would prefer that I say that they are beyond substantiation). Indeed, it is a moot point whether we can say that the implications thus extracted are 'sound' – I suspect that it depends on what the reader expects of a 'philosopher': several generations of Straussians have found them to be both 'sound' and fructiferous. And so, once again, the question of how we identify which writings of the past are philosophical and how we read them haunts our discussion.

But in Culler's eyes, for any interpretation to be successful in exciting wonder it must be 'persuasive' ('In Defence', p. 110) and where appropriate there must be demonstrable 'independent evidence'. I do not find Strauss's reading persuasive, but would still be prepared to entertain it if it helped me to be a more perceptive reader of al-Fārābī's treatise, and, once again I repeat, I am intrigued by the observation that many have found it and continue to find it to be persuasive. What's more, any evidence Strauss might be able to muster probably does not qualify as 'independent', for it is derived from his own readings of other texts, be they later or earlier (though principally from his reading of Maimonides), even though I am unsure about what would constitute 'independent evidence' for Culler.

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[61] Nicholas Jardine, *The Scenes of Inquiry: On the Reality of Questions in the Sciences* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000 [1991]), p. 99.

[62] See Carlo Ginzburg, 'Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm', in Id., *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 96–125; Jardine, *Scenes of Inquiry*, pp. 96–99.

[63] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Anniversary Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005 [1983]), p. 109 notes that 'literary texts are "code-productive" and "code-transgressive" as well as "code-confirming"'. In this respect I do not see any difference between the texts which we identify as 'literary' and those we identify as 'philosophical': see note @@ below.

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But when I turn from Strauss's heady reading of al-Fārābī's *The Philosophy of Plato* to al-Fārābī's text itself, I begin to realise that my yearned for 'excess of wonder' is more academic bafflement at Strauss's wondrously arcane hermeneutical ingenuity: I am left more in confusion at how he reads the text than in wonder at the text thus revealed. In other words, I begin to think that I have learned little about al-Fārābī's treatise but much about Leo Strauss's method of reading.

So can Econian overinterpretation, as Gutas, 'The Study', p. 21, suggests, help us to understand the trajectories of Strauss's hermeneutical ingenuities? There is much in Eco's description which resonates. He identifies 'paranoiac' interpretation as suspicious reading which sees behind any example a secret to which the author alludes (*Interpretation*, p. 48), a reading predicated upon the elaboration of 'some kind of obsessive method' as a way of assessing evidence that leads to 'the overestimation of the importance of clues' (*Interpretation*, p. 49). Eco suggests that this is concomitant with, or attendant upon, the sacralization of secular texts within any culture.[64]

The 'secular sacred' text which Eco discusses is the writings of Dante. Eco notes that 'Dante was the first to say that his poetry conveyed a non-literal sense, to be detected… beyond and beneath the literal sense' (*Interpretation*, p. 60) (as the Alexandrians maintained of Aristotle's acroatic writings). However (and like the Straussian philosopher) Dante also furnished the 'keys for finding out the non-literal senses' and thus, for example, some scholars have discerned papal invective in 'every reference to erotic matters and to real people' without pausing to wonder why Dante should have taken the trouble to conceal his invective thus when he did not take the trouble to conceal it elsewhere, for example in his explicit invectives.

Eco discerns as typical of this kind of reading 'the principle of *post hoc, ergo ante hoc*' (p. 59), according to which 'a consequence is assumed and interpreted as the cause of its own cause' (*Interpretation*, p. 51). Or, in our case, a matrix of phenomena which Strauss discerned in Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* is uncovered in al-Fārābī's *The Philosophy of Plato* and thus becomes its cause. Suspicious reading, an obsessive method, the overestimation of clues: these are features of Strauss's reading 'between the lines' of al-Fārābī's text.

One of the reasons that his hermeneutic exerts such persuasive appeal on others is, I would like to propose, a further feature of the complex of overinterpretation: the sacralization of non-sacred texts. Strauss, it seems to me, takes a body of texts and not only canonises them but beatifies them (and their reader), elevating both to the level of the sacred. They thereby *become* Revelation. Texts are recalcitrant and often truculent in the way they resist reading. It can be fiendishly difficult to decide 'what

[64] 'As soon as a text becomes sacred for a certain culture, it becomes subject to the process of suspicious reading and therefore to what is undoubtedly an excess of interpretation … in the case of texts which are sacred […] one cannot allow oneself too much licence, as there is usually a religious authority and tradition that claims to hold the key to its interpretation … this attitude towards sacred texts … has also been transmitted, in secularised form, to texts which have become metaphorically sacred in the course of their reception' (*Interpretation*, p. 52–53). I will explore this observation in my projected article on overstanding al-Fārābī's *Falsafat Aflāṭun*, in the context of a discussion of the similarities I perceive between al-Fārābī's ambagiously oracular texts and the Quran.

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is being talked about' (Eco, *Interpretation*, p. 63). Strauss offers us a way to make this decision with confidence and thus dispels the spectre of interpretative uncertainty.

The History of Philosophy

As an undercurrent to much of the previous discussions there runs the questions of what we intend by the term 'philosophy', how and which texts we identify as philosophical, and whether we agree that philosophical (or theological) writing is a particular kind of writing, one that marks it off as distinct from imaginative writing, or historical writing or poetry, for example.[65] I am not sure, in the case of the Arabic-Islamic philosophical (or theological) writings I am familiar with, that this distinction is particularly helpful in all instances but in the present context I will not push the point.[66] Two observations seem clear to me, however:

1. most of the studies of what are identified as Arabic-Islamic philosophical (and/or theological) writings are predicated upon a strong notion of what it is to do philosophy: 'that philosophy is characterised by a specific set of tasks which remain constant through history … manifest in the continued recurrence of certain typical problems' – or in Rorty's phrase, 'that "philosophy" is the name of a natural kind'[67]; consequently, because philosophy is distinct and autonomous, texts identified as philosophical must also be autonomous[68];
2. most of the scholars who study Arabic-Islamic philosophical (and/or theological writings) and who do not confine their interests exclusively to the arguments presented in the texts (though even there I suspect that such exclusivity is impossible) entertain perhaps something akin to Skinner's minimalist authorial intentionalism based on speech-act theory or at least a fuzzy version of the Econian

[65] See the remarks on genre made by Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Relationship of Philosophy to its Past', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 31–48 (at p. 32); Skinner, *Visions*, p. 124.

[66] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 126, reminds us that 'philosophy, law, political theory work by metaphor just as poems do, and so are just as fictional.'

[67] Krüger, 'Why Do We Study', p. 79; Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy', p. 63. Krüger, p. 86, clarifies the extension of this notion as 'transcendental' philosophy. An inflection of this approach is that when a scholar discerns in a text 'certain typical problems' or 'certain fundamental alternative approaches to the solution' (Krüger, p. 79), she identifies the text as philosophical. This, is of course, the hermeneutical circle: 'individual features are intelligible in terms of the entire context' (here the strong notion of 'philosophy') 'and the entire context becomes intelligible through the individual features': Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 64.

[68] Krüger, developing an insight of Rorty's, argues that such autonomy is a corollary of this ideal of philosophy because 'philosophy investigated the time-transcendent structure of human reason or human nature'. In an observation which is evocative of the Arabic ninth- and tenth-century textual heritage, he likens it in this respect to theology, the object of which, 'God, is conceived as always present and immutable (more so than nature) but lacking availability' (p. 86).

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model of interpretation. After all, this kind of writing seems to make claims on us as readers, claims relating, among other things, to persuasion, conviction, honesty and authority – or put simply, the true meaning of existence.

So we must first begin by assuming that the philosopher when he entextualises his ideas *intends* to be honest and, unless he tells us that this is not so, that he *means* the ideas or theories or arguments which he presents as his own to be at least representative, if not conclusive.[69]

And once we have assented to the text in this manner and on these terms, a number of consequences occur:

1. We honour the texts which we christen as philosophy and are honoured by them in turn. The 'sacralization' of these works, discussed above in the context of Eco's analysis of 'paranoiac' interpretation, is thus not a Straussian peccadillo but is an extreme formulation of a foundational strategy of the study of Arabic-Islamic philosophical texts.[70]
2. It is a small step to confound the model author with the empirical author (in Eco's terms) and thus to generate a biographical narrative of texts and their correspondingly entextualised arguments. This is even more compelling in writings which we identify as philosophical because for so many of us philosophy is almost always and by its very nature presumed to be systematic and held to seek the removal (often over time) of inconsistencies; it thus demands that its products be cast into a narrative which highlights this systematic consistency.
3. This again convinces us of the hegemony of intentionalism, according to which the empirical author-philosopher becomes more important than the text: the author-philosopher is recreated as the protagonist of the narrative biography of his philosophical writings.

This in turn leads to the following curious paradox:

4. That while some scholars with an interest in the history of Arabic-Islamic philosophy are undoubtedly among the closest and most sophisticated of readers, they may also and simultaneously be (viewed from the present methodological and critical perspective) the naïvest of readers.

Uncorrected Proof

[69] That we know what al-Fārābī had in mind when he wrote implies that al-Fārābī knew what he had in mind, that he was in complete control of his meanings, that his intentions were fully achieved (that he set out to write a comedy but composed a tragedy, for example) and were not, say, contradictory, or deluded, or changed mid-way through composition; it also implies that the text which gives us access to al-Fārābī's mind (intention) is a harmonious and integral whole, that it is not only an independent but also a coherent artefact; and anyway 'an author's intention is itself a complete "text", which can be debated, translated and variously interpreted just like any other'; see Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, pp. 41, 60, 64, and 101. I would not want to dispense with all consideration of intentions completely, merely to argue for the insufficiency of any presumption that it is the hegemonic and over-riding consideration in interpreting the texts which we read.

[70] See Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy', pp. 58–59, for the use of the term philosophy as a 'honorific'.

Editor's Proof

Sigmund Freud and the Alethiometer

Heinrich Meier claims that 'the sole political act of consequence that Strauss brought himself to launch was to found a school' (pp. xvii–xviii). Schools come about in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons: they do not always depend upon the conscious decision of a founder. They can grow organically, as a development of the success and appeal of a particular teaching combined with an enduring lifestyle (the *Ḥ*anābila, for example); they can be an act of piety, on the part of disciples (the Shāfiʿiyya, for example); they can emerge as the result of regional practices (as in the case Medinan *fiqh*, for example); they can be the result of a taxonomist's mania for classification, as is so often happens in the Arabic heresiographies, such as al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*. They can emerge as a consequence of a reaction-formation, as when al-Ashʿarī repudiated his Muʿtazilite teaching and his doctrines in turn were developed into the Ashʿariyya. Or, they can represent, as Strauss's case suggests to me (Meier's claim notwithstanding), an attempt on the part of a thinker to preserve his legacy and perpetuate his teachings. In this respect, Strauss may resemble Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic movement and a thinker much exercised, like Strauss, though for quite different reasons, over his Jewish heritage.

Consider the following statement. The book

> [w]as bound to be something fundamentally new and shattering to the uninitiated. Concern for these uninitiated compels me to keep the completed essay secret.

This statement, so redolently and, as it were, resolutely Straussian, does not in fact originate with Strauss or one of the Straussians but is a comment by Freud, in a letter written in Vienna describing his work *Moses and Monotheism*.[71] The sentiments it voices are just those expressed by Strauss in a letter concerning his reading of Maimonides (see note @@ above).

There are other similarities. Both seem to have been gripped by a certain ambivalence about contemporary Judaism, though in radically different ways, with Freud seeking to analyse Judaism on account of the gift of monotheism which he thought it gave to humanity and Strauss endeavouring to salvage Judaism through Maimonides. The Straussian opposition of Athens and Jerusalem is echoed in the Freudian polarity of science versus the delusion of religion.[72] Freud tends to view human nature as Strauss views philosophical works, as decontextualised: neither thinker regularly takes into account how humans or texts may be grounded in specific contexts. The unconscious, too, for Freud is decontextualised in that it is timeless, just as philosophy is for Strauss: 'the same primordial struggle' endures over (or better: despite) time.[73]

[71] Quoted from Mark Edmundson, *The Death of Sigmund Freud: Fascism, Psychoanalysis and the Rise of Fundamentalism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 145.

[72] John Forrester, 'Introduction', in Sigmund Freud, *Interpreting Dreams*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. xxiii–xxv.

[73] Jonathan Lear, *Freud* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 44.

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Editor's Proof

Accordingly, we witness Freud grappling with the encoded expressions of the blurring in the unconscious of past, present and future whereas Strauss seeks to ensure the future of philosophy through the excavation in the present of its past. Our principal means of access to the unconscious is through the dream, which becomes in Freud's system what the philosophical writing is in Strauss's theories: the text of the philosophical writing is the manifest content of the dream, the philosophical message its latent content. Censorship (a Freudian form of persecution) is ever-present in the 'dream-work' as vital, repressed, wishes are distorted into indifferent and harmless images because they are rejected as unacceptable, just as the philosopher distorts and represses the true message of philosophy, tucking it away in his text in places where few would think to look. Just as there are rules for reading between the lines, so there are identifiable mechanisms (e.g. absences, elisions, compressions and displacements) which we should be on the look out for as we seek to read between the lines of the dream-images in order to gain access to the distorted dream-thoughts.[74]

In order to interpret both these texts, we have to, in Freud's words, become 'accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from unconsidered or unnoticed details, from the rubbish heap, as it were, of our observations'.[75] Thus, both thinkers urge us to cultivate and apply what Paul Ricoeur has described as 'the hermeneutics of suspicion'.[76] The esotericism of both dream and philosophy has for me two important consequences for how I understand Strauss's project, both of which I owe to John Forrester's brilliant study of Freud's *Interpreting Dreams*. As Forrester points out, the presence of

> Hidden meanings entails, interestingly enough, that the meaning is potentially shareable, that the dream is potentially a public act of revelation and communication, or can properly be rendered so.[77]

Thus, Strauss, having stumbled upon the secret of true philosophy, must divulge its esoteric nature in his writings: esotericism must be communicable in order to be recognised as esotericism.

The dreamer requires the interpreter in order to assist her in interpreting the dream.[78] Even Freud, who made of himself his own patient, and who is both the subject and the object of *Interpreting Dreams*, a book filled with analyses of his own dreams, rejected the ultimate success of self-analysis.[79] Forrester notes that the very act of dream interpretation places the interpreter

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[74] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 158; Forrester, 'Introduction', pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

[75] Quoted from Ginzburg, 'Clues', p. 99.

[76] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 7.

[77] Forrester, 'Introduction', p. xxxvi.

[78] Lear's interesting observation (*Freud*, p. 93) that 'Freud is primarily concerned not with the interpretation of dream but the self-interpretation of dreamers' does not obviate the need for interpretative assistance in the form of Freud or his surrogate, his dream book.

[79] See Lear, *Freud*, pp. 88–89; Forrester, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.

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> In the field of the 'latent,' beyond the manifest content and the resistances that prevent the dreamer going much beyond that content.[80]

In other words, the interpreter, the psychopomp, is a liminal figure, one who shares a presence in both the manifest and the latent content of the unconscious. So Strauss is simultaneously an exoteric and an esoteric philosopher, a liminal presence whose liminality we require in order to grow as philosophers.

Freud sought to hold his school together by means of precisely the kind of authoritarian patriarchy which so many of his writings seek to unseat. This did not prove hugely successful, though the success of the psychoanalytic movement more than amply compensated for Freud's idiosyncrasies as the 'father' of the school.[81] Strauss seems to have held his school together through what I can only describe as mythopoiesis: his vatic pronouncements on the writings which he sacralised are enrobed in the mythic and the holy and consequently exercise a passionate appeal to those initiated in the myth's mysteries.

Thus, his approach becomes a sort of alethiometer, an imagined mechanism for divining the truth described in *Northern Lights*, the first novel in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* Trilogy.[82] This novel is a Straussian tale of free-thinking and independent philosophical rationalism: Lord Azrael is the true philosopher, whose scientific inquiries are dedicated to exploring the nature of reality (dust) while his daughter Lyra Belacqua struggles against the mightiest institution of persecution, the totalitarian Magisterium, which seeks to control human minds. Lyra Belacqua is the potential philosopher who comes into possession of an alethiometer, a golden compass which, when properly used by the person gifted to do so, always indicates the truth. The Straussian hermeneutic is such an alethiometer which when properly applied by the right person will reveal the occluded nature of true philosophy.

Finally, let me point to what is for me the last peculiar, perplexing and confusing feature about Leo Strauss. Strauss thought that modern Judaism was in a state of deep crisis.[83] He seems to have turned to Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* to help him discern a solution to this crisis. In so doing, as he says in 'Farabi's Plato', he realised that

> Only by reading Maimonides's *Guide* against the background of philosophy thus understood, can we hope eventually to fathom its unexplored depths.[84]

His influentially vatic reconstitution of 'the general character of all literary productions of "the philosophers"' ('Farabi's Plato', p. 384) (al-Fārābī included) is thus an act of exegesis of Maimonides's text.

Uncorrected Proof

[80] Forrester, 'Introduction', p. xxxi.

[81] Edmundson, *The Death*, pp. 129–130.

[82] Philip Pullman, *His Dark Materials* (London: Scholastic Ltd, 1995).

[83] See Kenneth Hart Green, 'Leo Strauss', in *The History of Jewish Philosophy*, eds Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1997), II, pp. 820–853.

[84] Strauss, 'Farabi's Plato', p. 393.

Editor's Proof

Author Queries

Chapter No.: 15 0001629576

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	Footnotes in Chapter title has been changed as an Article Note and the rest of the footnote has been renumbered.	
AU2	Please update the page numbers instead of using @@ here and elsewhere in the chapter.	

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Chapter 16
Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist? The Problem, the Debate, and Its Philosophical Implications

[AU1] **Anna Akasoy**

Preliminary remark: The purpose of this contribution is not to discuss, let alone answer the question whether or not or in what sense Ibn Rushd was an Averroist. The problem has been discussed by several erudite scholars, and I am unable to contribute additional insights based on newly discovered or analysed source material. My aim is rather to explore the parameters which have determined the debate so far. Before we can determine the impact of certain philosophical ideas from the Islamic world in Western Europe, we need to reach an agreement about whether or not these ideas existed in the Islamic world in the first place, and if they did, in what shape and what was the position of the men who defended them. The deep divides among scholars studying the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy have often made it impossible to reach such an agreement, especially in the case of controversial ideas.[1] The purpose of this contribution is to take the debate around the origin of

The argument presented in this article was first developed in a contribution for a workshop on the transmission of radical ideas from the Islamic world to the West. I would like to thank the organisers, Patricia Crone, Jonathan Israel, and Martin Mulsow, as well as the participants for their responses.

[1] The question whether *falsafa* should be rendered as Islamic or Arabic philosophy has at least two levels. One of them concerns the body of texts: while 'Arabic philosophy' seems to exclude texts written in other languages of the Islamicate world, 'Islamic philosophy' seems to exclude Arabic texts written by Jewish and Christian authors which are part of the same tradition. The second level concerns the nature of the philosophy and its possible religious implications. For those who use the term 'Islamic philosophy' consciously, Islam is key and led to various strategies of harmonisation, while those who speak of 'Arabic philosophy' tend to suggest that the religious context is accidental. For the sake of convenience both terms are combined here. While I believe that the question of the body of texts is valid and important for the terminology, I doubt (as should become more obvious below) that this is a particularly useful battlefield for debating a much more complex set of questions.

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Averroism in the Islamic world as a starting point for analysing some of these divides. For this purpose, I found it useful to explore some of the methodological debates among scholars of the history of Western philosophy since some of the different tendencies in these debates align with those among scholars of the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy.[2]

Introduction

Some of the edited volumes on Ibn Rushd and Averroism which have been published in the last decades include at least one article which, in one way or another, addresses the question 'Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist?'[3] This question has been discussed and answered in various ways. The diversity of answers is due in part to the diversity of opinions among modern authors regarding the specific interpretation of Ibn Rushd/Averroes, and in part to the ways in which this question has been raised and understood.

One of the obvious difficulties involved in this question is the further, and equally thorny, question it contains, namely 'What is an Averroist?' The protagonists of the polemics against the Averroists in the thirteenth-century Latin West offer a mixed picture, which ranges from Averroes himself to those who base their radical ideas on his authority. Since my concern here is not with the Latin tradition, but with the ways in which modern scholars have sought to establish the extent, if any, to which radical notions of Averroism were indebted to Ibn Rushd, a very brief glance at some prominent testimonies shall suffice.

The first to use the expression 'Averroist' was Thomas Aquinas in his 1270 treatise *De unitate intellectus*, the target of which was a specific doctrine, the unicity of the intellect, i.e., denial of the immortality of the individual soul – the most prominent one among the heretic doctrines attributed to Averroes and the Averroists (often used interchangeably).[4] What seems obvious is that in addition to this very specific problem Aquinas was concerned with a more general issue, the apparent conviction

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[2] To this effect see also the postscript in Dimitri Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29 (2002), pp. 5–25 (25).

[3] Abdelmajid El Ghannouchi, 'Distinction et relation des discourse philosophique et religieux chez Ibn Rushd: Faṣl al-maqāl ou la double vérité', in *Averroes (1126–1198) oder der Triumph des Rationalismus*, ed. Raif Georges Khoury (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), pp. 139–145; Oliver Leaman, 'Is Averroes an Averroist?', in *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, eds Friedrich Niewöhner and Loris Sturlese (Zurich: Spur, 1994), pp. 9–22.

[4] Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, in *Aquinas against the Averroists. On There Being Only One Intellect*, trans. Ralph McInerny (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993). The longer title *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, which is often used to refer to the treatise, is a fourteenth-century emendation, as Dag Nikolaus Hasse reminds us in his '*Averroica secta*: Notes on the Formation of Averroist Movements in Fourteenth-Century Bologna and Renaissance Italy', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 307–331, at 309–310.

Editor's Proof

of the Averroists that if philosophy and religion make contradictory claims, the former is superior. It was also Aquinas's rendering of the Averroists' argument in this text which modern authors such as Friedrich Niewöhner have used in order to define the Averroists as a movement held together by their common claim that faith requires that one subscribes to positions which can be falsified with necessary arguments.[5]

Another well-known opponent of the Averroists in Paris who contributed to their definition as a group was Étienne Tempier, the Bishop of the city who, in 1277, famously condemned 219 theses taught by the masters of the *artes*. In the oft-quoted passage in the introduction to this document, the bishop accused them of having introduced ideas of non-Christian origin and presented them as irrefutable truths:

> …cum errores predictos gentilium scripturis muniant, quas, proh prudor! ad suam imperitiam asserunt sic cogentes, ut eis nesciant respondere. Ne autem, quod sic innuunt, asserere videantur, responsiones ita palliant, quod, dum cupiunt vitare Scillam, incidunt in Caripdim. Dicunt enim ea *esse vera secundum philosophiam, sed non secundum fidem catholicam, quasi sint due contrarie veritates*, et quasi contra veritatem sacre scripture sit veritas in dictis gentilium dampnatorum …
>
> (They support these mistakes with the texts of the gentiles which – o shame! -, as they stipulate because of their ignorance are so convincing that they cannot refute them. In order to disguise what they are claiming, they hide their responses so that while they intend to avoid Scylla, they are caught by Charybdis. They say that these are claims which are true according to philosophy, but not according to the Catholic faith as if they were two contrary truths and as if they were against the truth of the holy scripture true in what the damned gentiles say …)[6]

The parameters in the criticism of the Averroists remained largely the same during the following centuries and doctrinal features were often interpreted as reflecting Ibn Rushd's own ideas. While problems arising from Averroism in Christian contexts were in all likelihood closer to the hearts of their critics, medieval polemicists of Islam also stressed the difficulties philosophers – here praised for their intellectual achievements – encountered in Islamic environments hostile to reason.[7] When Leibniz discussed Averroes's arguments against the immortality of the individual soul and denounced them as a misinformed over-reliance on Aristotle, he pointed out that the Averroists held this position as a philosophical truth while protesting at the same time 'their acquiescence in Christian theology, which declares the soul's

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[5] Friedrich Niewöhner, 'Zum Ursprung der Lehre von der doppelten Wahrheit: Eine Koran-Interpretation des Averroes,' in *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, eds Niewöhner and Sturlese, pp. 23–41, 25. The Latin text has: 'per rationem concludo de necessitate… firmiter tamen teneo oppositum per fidem. Ergo sentit quod fides sit de aliquibus, quorum contraria de necessitate conclude possunt.'

[6] *Aufklärung im Mittelalter? Die Verurteilung von 1277: Das Dokument des Bischofs von Paris*, ed. Kurt Flasch (Mainz: Dieterich, 1989), p. 89. It was not Tempier's first condemnation. On 10 December 1270, he condemned 13 propositions including the unity of the intellect and the eternity of the world, but there is no trace yet of a doctrine referring to a possible superiority of philosophy or reason over revelation or religion.

[7] John Tolan, '"Saracen Philosophers Secretly Deride Islam"', *Medieval Encounters*, 8 (2002), pp. 184–208.

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immortality.'[8] Leibniz does not use the term 'double truth' here, but adds that 'this distinction was held suspect, and this divorce between faith and reason was vehemently rejected by the prelates and the doctors of that time, and condemned in the last Lateran Council under Leo X.'[9] For Pierre Bayle, a contemporary of Leibniz and a target of his criticism, this at least inward preference for reason seems to have been a characteristic of the Muslim philosophers in general, but his particular focus was on Averroes.[10]

In the reactions against the Averroists (and modern discussions of both Averroists and their critics) we can thus identify two kinds of problems: one of them is a specific set of doctrines, most prominently the denial of the immortality of the individual soul and the eternity of the world, the other one the general approach to the relationship between philosophy and revealed religion. The two levels are connected since the double truth allows the Averroists to maintain their own, radical philosophical views while accepting at the same time the opposed religious doctrines.

Averroism, Averroes and Ibn Rushd

One way of dealing with the question 'Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist?' would be to discuss how far the ideas which held these people together (whether in their self-image or in the polemics) were directly inspired by the philosophy of Ibn Rushd. Some modern scholars, most notably Fernand van Steenberghen, have pointed out that in fact thirteenth-century Averroism was nothing else than radical Aristotelianism, limiting the role of Ibn Rushd to that of the commentator as which he was known. Others, however, have objected to this and pointed out that – even though the conflict between Aristotelian and Christian doctrines would have arisen with or without Ibn Rushd – both according to the evidence of the texts and in the perception of contemporaries the Arabic tradition was decisive. Aquinas, for example, points out:

> For a long time now there has been widespread an error concerning intellect that originates in the writings of Averroes. He seeks to maintain that what Aristotle calls the possible, but he infelicitously calls the material, intellect is a substance which, existing separately from the body, is in no way united to it as its form, and furthermore that this possible intellect is one for all men.[11]

This leaves the question whether or not the Averroists interpreted the Arab philosopher correctly and to what extent their thought was independent. Referring to 'Latin Averroism' is a way of alluding to the possibility of an independent Latin development.

[8] Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays and the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 80, available online on www.gutenberg.org (accessed 18 March 2008). See also Marco Sgarbi's Chap. 13 in this volume.

[9] Leibniz, *Theodicy*, p. 80. See also Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 626.

[10] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 621–622.

[11] Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus*, p. 19.

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John Marenbon took up an earlier suggestion made by Renan and explored the creative use of Averroes, proposing the following criteria as distinguishing the Averroists who:

(a) accepted Averroes's view that there is only a single potential intellect;
(b) concentrated their efforts on reaching and examining an accurate account of Aristotle's ideas – usually based on that presented by Averroes – even where these positions are incompatible with Christian teaching (in particular, the position that the world has no beginning); and,
(c) adopted some sort of strategy to explain why they, though Christians, did (a) and (b)[12]

In what follows, I will focus on the problems involved in (b) and (c), i.e., the relationship between philosophy and religion and various versions of the double truth thesis as attempts to solve these problems. In what follows, I will use the terms 'Averroism' and 'Averroists' primarily along those lines, unless specific doctrines concerning the intellect or the world are at stake.

Obviously, there were no direct personal interactions between Ibn Rushd and the Latin Averroists, and our discussion has to be one which is focussed on the transmission of his *texts* into Western Europe. Several of Ibn Rushd's writings include statements that are relevant for specific Averroistic doctrines and allow for speculation concerning the more general relationship between philosophy and religion. In addition to the Long Commentaries on *De anima* and the *Metaphysics*, his refutation of al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, is an important source for his doctrines concerning the soul. As some modern scholars have argued, Ibn Rushd varies his statements about the mortality of the human soul according to the audience he addresses. While a non-philosophical audience has to be reassured that the soul is immortal, an audience trained in philosophical matters understands that this applies to the intellect.[13]

Another doctrine associated with the medieval conflict between philosophy and religion is that of the eternity of the world – Ibn Rushd presents arguments for this doctrine based on the Aristotelian principle that a *creatio ex nihilo* is impossible. He uses the argument from the eternity of matter in his commentaries on the *Physics* and *De caelo*. In *Faṣl al-maqāl* (*The Decisive Treatise*), where he argues that a lot of the conflict is due to different terminologies of philosophers and theologians, he distinguishes *muḥdath*

[12] John Marenbon, 'Latin Averroism', in *Islamic Crosspollinations: Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, eds Anna Akasoy, James E. Montgomery and Peter E. Pormann (Exeter: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), pp. 135–147.

[13] For different statements and how they relate to different audiences see Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 335–336; Arthur Hyman, 'Averroes' Theory of the Intellect and the Ancient Commentators', in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution, and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126–1198)*, eds Gerhard Endress and Jan Aertsen (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 188–198; Id., 'Averroes as Commentator on Aristotle's Theory of the Intellect', in *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), pp. 161–191; Alfred Ivry, 'Averroes' Three Commentaries on *De Anima*', in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition*, eds Endress and Aertsen, pp. 199–216.

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('created'), *qadīm* ('eternal') and an intermediate (*wāsiṭ*) state,[14] and he suggests as a solution that the world is eternal a parte post, but not a parte ante.[15]

What can be observed in both cases – the immortality of the soul and the eternity of the world – is an attempt to harmonise mutually exclusive statements by identifying them as parts of specific discourses and shaped by the intellectual premises of very specific audiences. As a result of these premises, the claims made tend to be quite extreme – but the truth can be found somewhere in between if the contingent elements of the apparently mutually opposed doctrines are disregarded. It is also in *Faṣl al-maqāl* where we find Ibn Rushd's underlying assumptions about the relationship between philosophy and religion more explicitly spelled out.

Interpretations of *Faṣl al-maqāl* with respect to the double truth have focused on three elements.[16] The first is Ibn Rushd's distinction between different natures (*ṭabī'a*) of people and, resulting from them, different kinds of assent (*taṣdīq*). Some people are only susceptible to rhetorical or dialectical arguments, whereas others understand and use demonstrative arguments. The second element is that different paths lead to assent concerning the prophetic revelation and that – in Ibn Rushd's own words – 'truth does not contradict truth.' If, however, and this is the third aspect, demonstrative reasoning contradicts revelation, revelation has to be interpreted (*wa-in kāna mukhālifan ṭuliba hunālika ta'wīluhu*). This is similar to the practice used by the jurists, a parallel which is drawn throughout the text.

Ibn Rushd emphasises on more than one occasion that various senses of the revelation appeal to various intellectual capacities of people and how important it is that each person remain within the sphere indicated by his or her level of understanding. Contradictions alert those who are 'firmly grounded in knowledge' (the *rāsikhūna fī'l-'ilm* mentioned in the Quran, 3:7) to ways of reconciling them (as in the case of the eternity of the world mentioned above).[17] Interpretation is allowed

[14] Ibn Rushd, *The Book of the Decisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom*, ed. and trans. Charles Butterworth (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), p. 15.

[15] Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God*, pp. 9 and passim.

[16] Richard Dales, 'The Origin of the Doctrine of the Double Truth', *Viator*, 15 (1984), pp. 169–179; Niewöhner, 'Zum Ursprung der Lehre von der doppelten Wahrheit'; Richard Taylor, '"Truth Does not Contradict Truth": Averroes and the Unity of Truth', *Topoi*, 19 (2000), pp. 3–16.

[17] For *al-rāsikhūna fī'l-'ilm* see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 'Text and Textuality: Q. 3:7 as a Point of Intersection', in *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'ān*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), pp. 56–76 for the dynamic reception of the text. Stefan Wild, 'The Self-referentiality of the Qur'ān: Sura 3:7 as an Exegetical Challenge', in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish and Joseph W. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 422–436. Q 3:7 (in Yusuf Ali's translation) says: 'He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, *but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say*: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.' There are two ways of reading the passage in italics. The alternative to Yusuf Ali's translation is: '… but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. They say …'

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wherever an existing consensus is not based on certainty. Ibn Rushd distinguishes practical from theoretical matters here – in the case of the former a consensus has been reached and every Muslim can be aware of it, whereas concerning the latter, people have said from the early days of Islam onwards that there is an inner and an apparent sense and that the inner sense is not accessible to everybody. As far as the *rāsikhūna fī'l-'ilm* are concerned, they are obliged to use interpretation (*ta'wīl*) among themselves because their category of faith and assent is based on demonstration. If they do not use interpretation they are as guilty of unbelief as are those who use it even though they lack the necessary intellectual skills. The hidden meanings and interpretations must only be discussed in books about demonstration (*kutub al-barāhīn*) in order to protect simple believers.

Most modern authors would probably agree that Ibn Rushd indeed claimed here there is only one truth even when it seems as if philosophy and religion contradict each other. However, they clearly do not agree on the theoretical and practical implications of the need to harmonise these superficially contradictory doctrines. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that Ibn Rushd was an Averroist in the sense that he used the idea of the double truth because some kind of strategy was required to deal with clashes between philosophical and religious doctrines, but for these modern authors the double truth did not always imply the same. A relatively 'harmless' reading of Ibn Rushd might simply stress the need to keep rational or intellectual descriptions of the truth hidden from uneducated people in order not to confuse them. Alternatively, Ibn Rushd may have thought that religion and philosophy were two completely separate spheres and that while *p* can be true according to the principles of one sphere, non-*p* can be true according to the principles of the other sphere.[18] A more 'radical' reading might establish a hierarchy for such descriptions of the truth where revealed religion occupies a lower rank than philosophy or reason. It is the combination of the specific doctrines attributed to Ibn Rushd and this more theoretical framework which makes Averroism such an explosive phenomenon.

Friedrich Niewöhner took Ibn Rushd's reference to the need for interpretation in connection with Q 3:7 to be the starting point for his interpretation of the concept of the double truth in *FaṢl al-maqāl*. Just as rhetorical and dialectical arguments and their audiences need to be separated from demonstrative arguments and their audience, there are different ways of reading Q 3:7, one for those who have an understanding of philosophical matters, and another one for those who do not. While for the former it is only God who has an understanding of *ta'wīl* ('… but no one knows its hidden meanings except God'), the philosophers practice interpretation and, knowing that this is the true meaning, end the sentence after the *rāsikhūna fī'l-'ilm*, i.e., '… but no one knows its hidden meanings except God and those who are firmly

[18] For such a kind of medieval relativism see Marenbon, 'Latin Averroism', p. 140. This is also the way in which the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (ed. Philip P. Wiener [New York: Scribner, 1973–1974], s.v.) explains the double truth as described by Tempier. To me, it is not clear that this is what the bishop criticised – he rather seems to say that the Averroists claim *p* based on philosophical doctrines, whereas religion demands non-*p*. He takes it for granted that religion provides the true view.

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grounded in knowledge.' These two interpretations are mutually exclusive and a good example of the double truth. What Niewöhner's interpretation of the concept implies is that the philosophers have good reason not to worry about holding what appears to be heretical views, because they know that there are no real contradictions, only apparent ones, and that hiding them serves a purpose. While this interpretation may tell us something about the people involved – writers as well as audiences – it is inconclusive regarding a possible superiority of philosophy.

Oliver Leaman – after a revealing detour discussing Wittgenstein's critique of Moore (see below) – interprets Ibn Rushd as claiming that philosophy and religion are two different spheres, but also that philosophy is superior.[19] For Leaman, the double truth reflects Ibn Rushd's philosophy of language (i.e., a clear difference between ordinary human language and knowledge and divine language and knowledge; the basic point seems to be that God's knowledge is perfect whereas ours is relatively uninformed) and his denial of the mystery in this world. This is obvious in his turn against Neoplatonism and his lack of interest in mysticism. Leaman sees here the doctrine which connects more than anything else Ibn Rushd and the Averroists and clearly recognises in Ibn Rushd a precursor of the Enlightenment.

Richard Taylor has emphasised Ibn Rushd's claim in *Faṣl al-maqāl* that 'truth does not contradict truth.' According to Taylor, Ibn Rushd derived this principle from Aristotle's logic, but could not present it as such because he lived in an environment hostile to philosophy.[20] Two key questions are: do religion and philosophy describe the same truth in different ways? Is there a priority of one over the other? Taylor distinguishes between the practical sphere in which truth is determined in terms of the end to be achieved independent of whether those who act are convinced to do so by demonstrative, dialectical or rhetorical arguments, and the speculative sphere, in which truth can essentially only be grasped as truth by someone who practises the art of demonstration correctly, i.e., the philosopher. 'In this way, then, truth when grasped through sound and proper demonstration is prior in nature and commanding in relation to any possible interpretation of a text of Religious Law.'[21] Certain things in revealed law remain beyond possibilities of demonstrative proof, but the philosophers are in the position to point out what is clearly contrary to the demonstrated truth. 'There can be no "Double Truth" …,' Taylor concludes, 'although there may be truth doubly attained.'[22]

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[19] 'Is Averroes an Averroist?' and *Averroes and his Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 144–160. The statement is in accordance with Leaman's own view of Islamic philosophy. He denies that the compatibility of Islam and philosophy was a major concern for Muslim philosophers for the simple reason that Islam is a religion, not a philosophy. The *falāsifa* still assumed that religion and philosophy reflect the same truth. Oliver Leaman, 'Does the Interpretation of Islamic Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12 (1980), pp. 525–538, 529 and 535.

[20] Taylor, '"Truth Does not Contradict Truth"', p. 7.

[21] Ibid., p. 8.

[22] Ibid., p. 11.

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Muhsin Mahdi, who bases his interpretation on a structural analysis of *Faṣl al-maqāl*,[23] comes to the conclusion that Ibn Rushd intends to show that divine law and human wisdom share the same intention because they perfect human nature. As far as divine law is concerned, it is the theoretical challenge to acquire complete knowledge of God and his creation which has priority and which clearly goes beyond the practical obligations derived from the law. Philosophical reasoning is an instrument essential to the requirements of a true divine law.

Charles Butterworth takes the notion of an identical intention of divine law and human wisdom as the starting point for his analysis.[24] Related to the perfecting capacity of divine law is the requirement that someone who uses the tools of philosophy for such a purpose use them with this intention in mind, i.e., he must have moral virtue.[25] Butterworth thus emphasises the practical implications of the text. Divine law and wisdom both aim at the well-being of people. 'So stated,' Butterworth concludes, 'the agreement between the two depends in no way upon determining to what extent individual philosophers privately assent to the Law nor in probing the sincerity of their various efforts to buttress its claims. The reasoning leading to this interpretation looks, rather, to what is required for sound political life.'[26] In Butterworth's reading of *Faṣl al-maqāl*, there is nothing which hints to a possible superiority of demonstrative reasoning. 'If anything,' Butterworth explains Ibn Rushd's argument, 'he tries to avoid juxtaposing the two [i.e. Law and wisdom] in such a hierarchical fashion. Neither priority nor ascendance is at issue: the connection to be determined eventually is close to one of parity, that is, agreement on all levels.'[27]

Since Averroism is commonly regarded as a radical set of ideas, in what follows, double truth is usually taken in a strong sense, implying a disequilibrium between religion and philosophy in which the latter is the stronger side.

There is disagreement not only about which kind of double truth Ibn Rushd defended, but about the context of interpretation which has to be applied to *Faṣl al-maqāl*. This concerns first of all the nature of the text in a general sense. Authors of diverse inclinations have pointed out that *Faṣl al-maqāl* was written from a very specific perspective, i.e., that Ibn Rushd dealt in this text with the problem of revealed religious law and reason from a legal point of view rather than presenting

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[23] Muhsin Mahdi, 'Remarks on Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*', in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. Michael Marmura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 188–202.

[24] Charles Butterworth, 'The Source that Nourishes: Averroes's Decisive Determination', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 5 (1995), pp. 93–119.

[25] Ibid., p. 104.

[26] Ibid., p. 119.

[27] Ibid., p. 97.

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a programmatic theoretical text.[28] To put it in Ibn Rushd's own words: his aim (*gharaḍ*) is to investigate from the point of view of law (*'alā jihat al-naẓar al-sha'ī*) whether the study of philosophy and logical sciences is permitted, prohibited or commanded. But what does such a perspective imply? And what could *Faṣl al-maqāl* have looked like had Ibn Rushd written it as a programmatic theoretical statement? There are texts in the history of Islamic law and religion which may give us an idea of what it could have meant to approach the same problem once from a legal perspective and once from that of dogmatic theology. Ibn Qutayba's *Ta'wīl* and Shāfi'ī's *Risāla* are such examples. They are divided by different hermeneutic techniques.[29] But it is difficult to imagine a similar difference between two versions of *Faṣl al-maqāl*. First of all, dogmatic theology and programmatic theoretical statements are not the same thing nor does *Faṣl al-maqāl* share the character of the *Risāla* as a theoretical legal text. In fact, the legal dimension of *Faṣl al-maqāl* is not identical with *fiqh*,[30] but rather with revealed law – indeed *shar'* seems much closer to 'religion' here than to 'law'. *Fiqh*, as Ibn Rushd explains, is only part of the practical side of *shar'*.[31] The legal dimension is perhaps also obvious in the role of the legal scholars who often serve as a yardstick in the text: this is how the jurisconsults proceed with their way of reasoning – how much more must that be the case if we deal not only with *fiqh*, but with creation as a whole?

It is equally unclear what a legal as opposed to a programmatic theoretical *Faṣl al-maqāl* might imply with regard to Ibn Rushd the Averroist. Is the author of the legal text an Averroist, whereas the author of the programmatic theoretical text is not? Or is it the other way around? Perhaps one is more Averroistic than the other? Or one of them is interested in matters of practical application, while the other one is not? Is a programmatic *Faṣl al-maqāl* built on demonstrative arguments, but a legal *Faṣl al-maqāl* is merely founded on dialectical and rhetorical ones?[32] Are both combined in the same text with the help of a very subtle double truth strategy? In any case, it does not seem likely that readers in the Latin West would have been

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[28] Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century', p. 14. While I can see the point in Gutas's argument that *Faṣl al-maqāl* has been too uncritically taken by the Straussians as representing a typical discussion in Arabic philosophy which may correspond to the question whether history of philosophy is concerned with problems rather than doctrines, theories or systems (see below), I find it much more difficult to follow the implications of his stress on the character of the text as a legal discussion. For the text's legal perspective see also Niewöhner, 'Zum Ursprung der Lehre von der doppelten Wahrheit', p. 27.

[29] Joseph E. Lowry, 'The Legal Hermeneutics of al-Shāfi'ī and Ibn Qutayba: A Reconsideration', *Islamic Law and Society*, 11 (2004), pp. 1–41 (27ff).

[30] Pace Leaman, *Averroes*, p. 144.

[31] Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, p. 23.

[32] Mahdi, 'Remarks on Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*', describes the 'legal character' of the first part of *Faṣl al-maqāl* as follows: 'It seems clear that the kind of inquiry employed in the first part of the *Decisive Treatise* is not a demonstrative inquiry of the kind employed in demonstrative books. It is not clear, however, that it is identical with the promised "legal inquiry"; rather, it appears that Averroes' position is not legal nor demonstrative, but situated somewhere in between' (p. 189).

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aware of such subtleties even if the text had been translated into Latin – and this is the key problem if we are interested in the question of the transmission of radical ideas associated with Averroism from the Islamic world to the West.

Since Harry Austryn Wolfson's article on the 'twice-revealed Averroes',[33] scholars have regarded Averroes less as a monolithic figure but rather as somebody whose character changed with the degree to which his works became known in the Latin West. The Averroes of the mid-thirteenth century, the commentator, is thus different from Averroes, the author of *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, the Latin translation of which was completed in 1328 by Kalonymos ben Kalonymos for Robert of Anjou. And both authors are different from the man who wrote not only the commentaries and the refutation of al-Ghazālī, but other commentaries and independent works which were never translated into Latin. *Faṣl al-maqāl* is one of these works, although it was translated into Hebrew in the Middle Ages – at the turn of the fourteenth century, as Norman Golb estimated.[34] The discrepancy between Averroes as the author of the translated commentaries and Averroes as the author of a whole variety of other texts is so substantial that Alfred Ivry has suggested dealing with them almost as separate figures, i.e., Averroes and Ibn Rushd.[35] Yet another person is the one created in the polemical tradition – the man who promoted the idea of the three impostors – a phenomenon John Marenbon has referred to as 'phantom Averroism'.[36]

Can we perhaps then explain the different answers to the question 'Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist?' by suggesting that those who answer the question with 'yes' have limited their investigation to the texts which were available to the Averroists in Latin, whereas those who answer the same question with 'no' have studied all preserved texts and recognised that the Averroists were inspired by isolated statements which – when read in context – suggest different conclusions? The difference between Ibn Rushd and Averroes is important on two levels here because if we were to venture such a hypothesis, the assumption would be that: (1) it was only the Latin texts translated by the 1260s which originally inspired the movement of the Averroists, and (2) the extent to which Ibn Rushd and Averroes are identical in these texts (in other texts we are dealing with Ibn Rushd, but not with Averroes) depends on how much one thinks they need to be read in the context of other, untranslated

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[33] Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'The Twice-Revealed Averroes', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), pp. 373–392 (repr. in Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky and George H. Williams, 2 vols [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973], I, pp. 371–401).

[34] Norman Golb, 'The Hebrew Translation of Averroes' "Faṣl al-maqāl"', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 25 (1956), pp. 91–113 and 26 (1957), pp. 41–64.

[35] Alfred Ivry, 'Averroes and the West: The First Encounter/Non-Encounter', in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture*, ed. Ruth Link-Salinger (Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 1988), pp. 142–158; see also Charles Burnett, 'The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science', in *Islam and the Italian Renaissance*, eds Charles Burnett and Anna Contadini (London: The Warburg Institute, 1999), pp. 185–198.

[36] Marenbon, 'Latin Averroism', p. 144.

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texts. While such an approach would probably not solve the problem, it would also lead to further difficulties. All the different interpreters assume that the texts they focus on are representative of what Ibn Rushd says in other texts or that different audiences explain differences between statements in various texts and that if read in the light of the respective audience, the conclusion remains the same. The tendency of modern scholars to present harmonised and consistent views of historical authors is a methodological problem which deserves to be discussed separately.

The Historical Ibn Rushd

As far as the interpretation of the text and matters of the transmission of *Faṣl al-maqāl* are concerned, we have thus reached a dead end. There is no consensus as to what a double truth could have meant for Ibn Rushd in *Faṣl al-maqāl*, whether he embraced such an idea and used it in texts translated by the mid-thirteenth century and how close his ideas were to those the Averroists (allegedly) held. Further studies of Ibn Rushd's texts may lead to further conclusions, but considering the already voluminous bibliography on these subjects they seem just as likely to perpetuate the existing disagreements. Further insights may be gleaned from a historical contextualisation of Ibn Rushd the person as well as from a broader philosophical interpretation. Let us abandon for a moment the problem of the transmission of his ideas to the West. As far as the historical context is concerned, Ibn Rushd's Almohad background is undoubtedly decisive. There are two issues I would like to highlight: (1) the rationalist character of the Almohad movement, and (2) the *miḥna* ('inquisition') of Ibn Rushd.

In his *Dhayl ta'rīkh Dimashq* (*Addendum to the History of Damascus*), Ibn al-Qalānisī (d. 1160) famously attributed a *madhhab fikr* ('school of thought') to the Almohad mahdi Ibn Tūmart.[37] This expression has often been taken as a testimony to the rationalist character of Almohad ideology. Indeed, Almohad history provides several examples of such a *madhhab fikr*. A rationalist tendency became obvious in the use the Almohads made of al-Ghazālī in their propaganda. As a mystic and philosopher, al-Ghazālī allowed the Almohads to integrate the anti-Almoravid opposition among the Andalusi Sufis and their own religious ideas which emphasised the need to approach the fundamental textual sources of the Islamic religion – Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* – with sound reason instead of relying blindly on human authorities (*taqlīd*).[38] Furthermore, the Almohads could count on a long tradition in al-Andalus to combine philosophy and Sufism.

[37] Ed. Henry Frederick Amedroz (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyīn, 1908), pp. 291–293.

[38] Maribel Fierro, 'Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The Ghuraba' in al-Andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century', *Arabica*, 47 (2000), pp. 230–260; Ead., 'Revolución y tradición: Algunos aspectos del mundo del saber en al-Andalus durante las épocas almorávide y almohade', in *Biografías almohades*, II, eds María Luisa Ávila and Maribel Fierro (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), pp. 131–165; Tilman Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene: Die Heilszusage des sunnitischen Islams* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 33–175.

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An episode which confirms an Almohad interest in philosophy is the patronage of the second Almohad Caliph, Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (reg. 1163–1184), for Ibn Rushd, in particular the fact that he commissioned him to write commentaries on Aristotle's works as al-Marrākushī famously describes in the following passage, where he quotes Ibn Rushd concerning their meeting in 1168/9:

> When I entered into the presence of the Prince of the Believers, Abū Ya'qūb, I found him with Abū Bakr Ibn Ṭufayl alone. Abū Bakr began praising me, mentioning my family and ancestors and generously including in the recital things beyond my real merits. The first thing that the Prince of the Believers said to me, after asking me my name, my father's name and my genealogy was: 'What is their opinion about the heavens?' – referring to the philosophers – 'Are they eternal or created?' Confusion and fear took hold of me, and I began making excuses and denying that I had ever concerned myself with philosophic learning; for I did not know what Ibn Ṭufayl had told him on the subject. But the Prince of the Believers understood my fear and confusion, and turning to Ibn Ṭufayl began talking about the question of which he had asked me, mentioning what Aristotle, Plato and all the philosophers had said, and bringing in besides the objections of the Muslim thinkers against them; and I perceived in him such a copious memory as I did not think could be found [even] in any one of those who concerned themselves full time with this subject. Thus he continued to set me at ease until I spoke, and he learned what was my competence in that subject; and when I withdrew he ordered for me a donation in money, a magnificent robe of honour and a steed …
>
> Abū Bakr Ibn Ṭufayl summoned me one day and told me, 'Today I heard the Prince of the Believers complain of the difficulty of expression of Aristotle and his translators, and mention the obscurity of his aims, saying, "If someone would tackle these books, summarise them (*yulakhkhiṣuhā*) and expound their aims, after understanding them thoroughly, it would be easier for people to grasp them." So if you have in you abundant strength for the task, perform it …' This was what led me to summarise (*talkhīṣ*) the books of the philosopher Aristotle.[39]

This sounds like a familiar constellation – the 'Abbāsid caliphs in ninth-century Baghdad had sponsored the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, and later rulers too (such as the Būyid ʿAḍud al-Dawla) offered patronage to philosophers in their entourage. If we take the ʿAbbāsid patronage as a model, the motives seem obvious: a rational interpretation of the sources made the rulers more independent of the emerging class of traditional scholars ('*ulamā*'). This conflict broke out openly during the *miḥna* under the caliph al-Ma'mūn (reg. 813–833). The Almohads may very well have proceeded along similar lines. To be sure, there are numerous differences between the ʿAbbāsids of the ninth century and the Islamic militant movement of Berbers inspired by messianism of the twelfth century, but rationalism may have had similar advantages for the political leaders in both cases.

A problem with the story about the Almohad patronage for Ibn Rushd is that – as Sarah Stroumsa has pointed out in a recent article – it relies too much on one particular source, the above-quoted al-Marrākushī, despite several reasons to consider this source unreliable: it is poorly transmitted in only one manuscript, the author wrote ca. 60 years after the meeting, and he knew fairly little of philosophical

[39] Translation Hourani from *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, trans. George F. Hourani (London: Luzac, 1961), pp. 12–13.

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matters.[40] Nevertheless, what we can say is that the Almohads seem to have been interested in presenting themselves as patrons of philosophy.

Another problem concerns the episode which happened under Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf's successor, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb (reg. 1184–1199), when Ibn Rushd was banished from court and his books were burned. His disciples were also affected by these persecutions. Often quoted is the case of Ibn Ṭumlūs (ca. 1150–1156 until 1123 or 1124), the author of a treatise on logic who does not mention his teacher's name. Ibn Rushd was only readmitted to court a year before he died in 1198. This event has puzzled scholars for a long time. While the conventional narrative claims that it was a religious turn against philosophy which provoked these events (a version of this narrative can be seen in the movie *Al-Maṣīr*, directed by the Egyptian Yusuf Shaheen), other scholars are more cautious. They suggest that Ibn Rushd's problems may very well have been due to a conflict among local Maliki legal scholars (a group which he was part of) or between individuals competing for the support of the ruler. The last person to have published a thorough study of the primary sources is Émile Fricaud in an article in 2005.[41] The conclusion for the time being seems to be that the *miḥna* may have had something to do with Ibn Rushd's philosophical interests, but the exact role they played remains unclear.

But what are the implications of this for Ibn Rushd's possible Averroist identity and the double truth? If someone stresses the Almohad background he would probably have to claim that for Ibn Rushd there was only one truth in accordance with the true *tawḥīd* (declaration of the unity of God) of the *muwaḥḥidūn*, the Almohads. But the pronounced educational outlook of the Almohad movement probably also meant that one and the same truth could or even had to be presented in different ways to different audiences. A contradiction like that implied by the Bishop of Paris would not be part of such an understanding of the double truth. Then again, Ibn Rushd's message was not necessarily identical with that of the Almohads. As seen above, the reference to the *rāsikhūna fī'l-ʿilm* allows a variety of interpretations, and some readers such as Sarah Stroumsa have pointed out that Ibn Rushd actually presented positions which contradicted the insistence of the Almohads that the masses reject anthropomorphism – this, according to Ibn Rushd, bore the risk of leading them away from the truth.[42] Stroumsa agrees with Geoffroy's conclusion that Ibn Rushd was probably forced to revise his writing – this, however, remained a superficial revision (see below).

[40] Sarah Stroumsa, 'Philosophes almohades? Averroès, Maïmonide et l'idéologie almohade', in *Los Almohades: Problemas y perspectivas*, eds Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro and Luis Molina (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), II, pp. 1137–1162 (in particular 1140–1141).

[41] Émile Fricaud, 'Le problème de la disgrace d'Averroès', in *Averroès et l'averroïsme (XIIe–XVe siècle): Un itinéraire historique du Haut Atlas à Paris et à Padoue*, eds André Bazzana, Nicole Bériou and Pierre Guichard (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2005), pp. 155–189. See also the article on Ibn Rushd in the *Biblioteca de al-Andalus* (eds Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vílchez [Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2004-], IV, pp. 517–617) which offers an equally balanced view.

[42] Stroumsa, 'Philosophes almohades', pp. 1147–1149.

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Whatever the details of this matter and whatever the changes throughout the Almohad period, what seems clear is that there was a peculiar rationalist twist in the Almohad movement, its ideology and the way it presented itself. In the Almohad realm, the practice of philosophy had political implications. It is difficult to imagine that such a high-ranking figure as Ibn Rushd could have written books like *Faṣl al-maqāl* without the political elites taking an interest. But to what extent, to return to a possible transmission of Ibn Rushd's ideas, could this have been perceived in the Latin West? Should we perhaps assume that readers of Latin translations were aware of Ibn Rushd's Almohad background and interpreted his texts in this light? Again, it is important to look at the bigger picture here. If we consider Western European reactions to Islam and how they changed over the course of various centuries, there are two ways of explaining them: changes on the Christian side, and changes on the Muslim side. Even though much changed in the Latin West between the anti-Islamic polemics of the eleventh century and those of the Renaissance, it is also not the same kind of Islam Western Christians encountered. The Islam of the Andalusis and Berbers was very different from the Islam of the Ottoman Turks and the Arabs under their rule in the Eastern Mediterranean. Research so far has mostly focused on the internal Western dimension and largely ignored the possibility that diversity on the Muslim side provoked a diversity of reactions. When it comes to the role of philosophy in historical Islamic societies, some modern scholars have made claims of an essentialist nature, but pre-modern observers may have had more differentiated views.

As far as the Almohads are concerned, contemporary Christians living in the border region were almost certainly aware of the distinct character of the movement. Christian polemics in Spain reflect peculiarities of the intellectual landscape on the other side of the frontier, as Thomas Burman has shown in his research.[43] It is, of course, a different matter whether Christians regarded Almohad Islam as representative of Islam in general and whether or to what extent they thought that philosophy and rationalism were important in this context. Missionaries in the age of scholasticism, most prominently Ramón Llull, tried to use reason as a common ground between Christians and Muslims, but while somebody like Llull was clearly aware of the diversity within Islamic intellectual culture, it seems unlikely that he would have identified individual political movements or dynasties as defenders of reason. The irrational character of the Islamic religion, its opposition against reason even, remained an important theme in later polemics.

While it seems doubtful that there was much awareness of the details of inner-Islamic dividing lines among Christian writers in thirteenth-century Paris, later Western authors sometimes even display a blatant ignorance of the historical contexts of Muslim philosophers. When the fame of Averroes eclipsed that of Avicenna, Latin authors demonstrated a great inventiveness in rendering this development in the form of legends. Franciscus Calphurnius included the following account in his

[43] Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 78 ff.

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introduction to an edition of *The Canon* published in 1522: Avicenna, he says, was a prince in Cordova who built a hospital and offered medical treatment to the public. Averroes, a physician who lived at the same time, envied him this fame and tried to stir Algazel and Alfarabi against him, two colleagues who were living in the same house as Avicenna. When his efforts turned out to be in vain, Averroes resorted to more extreme measures and poisoned Avicenna.[44] To be sure, this is a very fanciful account, but it does not seem to suggest that the historical contexts of Averroes and the other authorities were well-known.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, with the Marquis d'Argens and Pierre Bayle, we can discern a greater awareness of the historical situation and the difficulties which Ibn Rushd faced.[45] It seems as if their knowledge of Ibn Rushd's biography and context was decisive for the interpretation of an original Averroistic dimension of his work. His personal fate may very well have confirmed to seventeenth-century readers what earlier interpreters had to extract by way of speculation. As we have seen above, however, modern scholars do not always follow along these lines or subscribe to the interpretation of Ibn Rushd as a theoretical and practical Averroist.

The verdict on the explanatory potential of the historical context is similar to that on problems of text interpretation and transmission: there is no overwhelming evidence which would clearly show either that Ibn Rushd was an Averroist or that he was not, nor, if indeed he was, in what sense exactly. Several mutually exclusive scenarios seem plausible. There are certainly gaps in our knowledge which can be filled. The corpus of Ibn Rushd's Arabic works is perhaps not as definite as it may seem. As Marc Geoffroy has shown only recently, it may be possible to reconstruct important changes in the development of Ibn Rushd's texts due to Almohad interference.[46] Sources which preserve quotations from Ibn Rushd's works such as Ibn Taymiyya's *Dar' taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa'l-naql* have not yet been exploited systematically. Marginal figures who could have inherited elements of Ibn Rushd's philosophy and provide independent testimonies have yet to be studied in detail.[47] New manuscripts might surface in long ignored West African libraries.

The fuller historical picture which will emerge once we have completed these tasks, will provide a better basis for the philosophical evaluation of Ibn Rushd as well as whether there were any Averroist convictions or anti-Averroistic polemics

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[44] Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'King Avicenna: The Iconographic Consequences of a Mistranslation', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 60 (1997), pp. 230–243; Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, *Avicenne en Occident* (Paris: Vrin, 1993), article XV, pp. 79–87. See also Amos Bertolacci in the present volume.

[45] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, p. 622 for D'Argens and p. 626 for Bayle.

[46] Marc Geoffroy, 'Ibn Rushd et la théologie almohadiste: Une version inconnue du *Kitāb al-kašf ʿan manāhiǧ al-adilla* dans deux manuscrits d'Istanbul', *Medioevo*, 26 (2001), pp. 327–352.

[47] A list of potentially relevant characters can be extracted from Josep Puig, 'Materials on Averroes's Circle', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 51 (1992), pp. 241–260 and and Muḥammad Ibn Sharīfa, *Ibn Rushd al-ḥafīd: Sīra wathā'iqiyya* (Casablanca: Maḥbaʿat al-najāḥ, 1999). Parallels can be found in Ibn Sabʿīn's *Sicilian Questions*, see my *Philosophie und Mystik in der späten Almohadenzeit* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 264–289.

Editor's Proof

among Muslim writers parallel to what we can find in thirteenth-century Paris.[48] On the other hand, the differences among scholars regarding the Averroistic implications of Ibn Rushd's works will not be solved by the discovery of further snippets of information. What is often at stake here is a very basic difference in methodology which leads us back to square one.[49]

The Straussians and Their Opponents

Scholars who believe in an Averroistic Ibn Rushd who had to adapt his form of expression to the threat of persecution are usually labelled Straussians, whereas their critics are classified as protagonists of an anti-Straussian backlash.[50] Very broadly speaking, their main disagreement concerns the nature of philosophy in historical Muslim societies and its possible political implications. The Straussians – in the tradition of Leo Strauss's interpretation of Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed* in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* – base their interpretations on the assumption that because of the nature of Islam and the nature of philosophy, the *falāsifa* had to disguise their real views. Straussians see what they refer to as Islamic political philosophy as part of an endeavour of philosophers to hide and protect Aristotle from the dominance of the revealed religions.[51] They present Islamic intellectual history as determined by a dichotomy between rationalist philosophers on the one hand and anti-philosophical, anti-rationalist, 'fundamentalist' religious scholars on the other. Such dichotomies are characteristic of the work of Strauss – the most notable one probably being that between Jerusalem and Athens.[52] Beginning

[48] See my 'Ibn Sab'īn's *Sicilian Questions*: the Text, its Sources, and their Historical Context', *al-Qanṭara*, 29 (2008), pp. 115–146.

[49] Methodology is used here in the sense of a set of methods including such of a philological nature (editorial principles such as how significant it is how an author should have interpreted Aristotle; how far should the Greek text of an Aristotelian work be used even if it was not at the disposal of the Muslim writer), historical contextualisation (should it be taken into consideration, for example, where an author got his money from or which audience he addressed) and philosophical interpretation (e.g. usefulness for today and whether a past philosopher was actually right) held together by a framework of more abstract ideas concerning the purpose of studying the history of philosophy.

[50] For what follows see, among other publications, Charles Butterworth, 'Averroës: Politics and Opinion', *The American Political Science Review*, 66 (1972), pp. 894–901; Id., 'Rhetoric and Islamic Political Philosophy,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972), pp. 187–198; Id., 'Ethical and Political Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 266–286; Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century'; James Montgomery in the present volume.

[51] Muhsin Mahdi, 'Philosophy and Political Thought: Reflections and Comparisons', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 1 (1991), pp. 9–29.

[52] Rémi Brague's addition to Mecca as representing the harmonising tradition of Islam, al-Fārābī in particular, is an unfortunate choice given that the holy city never was a centre of philosophy. 'Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca: Leo Strauss's "Muslim" Understanding of Greek Philosophy', *Poetics Today*, 19 (1998), pp. 235–259.

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with al-Fārābī, philosophers were constantly exposed to the threat of persecution and – following the model of Socrates – execution.[53] The idea of a 'double truth' reflects their strategy to avoid such a fate. On the more positive side, the philosophers also wanted to avoid confusing their uneducated audience which would have had a bad effect on society. For scholars of the Straussian tradition, the troubled relationship between philosophy and society was very much at the heart of their own interpretations of these philosophers. They have to assume that the philosophers deliberately misled their readers – very much in accordance with the strategy that Maimonides described in his *Guide*. In what follows, 'Straussianism' will be used in this sense, i.e., as the default assumption that because of a threat of persecution, philosophers in the Islamic world had to hide their real views between the lines. The term is neither meant to suggest a relationship between Strauss and the Straussians other than what is outlined above in broad terms nor does it claim to be an exhaustive description of the views of these scholars concerning the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy. As I will discuss below in more detail, however, this attitude of the Straussians might be connected with general assumptions about what the history of philosophy as philosophy can or should contribute to the well-being of a society as the writings of Muhsin Mahdi in particular suggest.[54]

The opponents of the Straussians, on the other hand, dismiss such assumptions as dogmatism without foundation in the texts themselves. According to these critics, the Jerusalem-Athens dichotomy is exaggerated and is not representative of the general concerns of Islamic/Arabic philosophy. In other words, in their view, the Straussians have already made up their minds and are looking in the Arabic texts for anything that confirms their opinions. For these critics, the Straussian claim that the philosophers did not express their genuine views openly makes their interpretations arbitrary. Relying on metaphysical ideas, they fail to provide an empirical foundation for their conclusions in the form of historical evidence. Dimitri Gutas, for example, as a leading voice against the Straussians challenged them to name one example of a philosopher who was actually persecuted for his *philosophical* ideas.[55] Interestingly, Ibn Rushd is not among the philosophers Gutas mentioned as those who have been persecuted for reasons other than their philosophical ideas. Given Gutas's emphasis on the legal character of *Faṣl al-maqāl*, one can only speculate that, according to him, it would have rather been Ibn Rushd's role as a legal scholar which got him into trouble. The various ways in which the *miḥna* against Ibn Rushd has been explained is a perfect illustration of the differences between the two camps – in fact, this is the litmus test for a scholar's stance on Straussianism. This does not, of course, preclude the possibility that while Ibn Rushd was indeed persecuted for his philosophical ideas, this kind of persecution was it is not a general rule in Islamic history. In what follows, I will focus on the most prominent representatives of the two sides of the

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[53] *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (New York: The Free Press, 1952), p. 33.

[54] See also 'On Ibn Rushd, Philosophy and the Arab World (Interview)', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 16 (1996), pp. 255–258.

[55] Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century', p. 20.

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debate, although other scholars will also be cited insofar as their views are related to more general differences in the study of Islamic/Arabic philosophy.

The divide between the Straussians and their opponents entails more than an argument about the relationship between religion and philosophy in the medieval Islamic world, the significance of this question for Islamic/Arabic philosophy, the position of the philosophers in Islamic societies and how these issues are intertwined. It also concerns their approach to the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy on a more fundamental level. Scholars are divided not only by the answers they are giving, but by the very nature of the questions they are asking. Straussian scholars such as Charles Butterworth are interested in finding out whether a medieval philosopher was actually right, whereas their opponents such as Dimitri Gutas focus their research on reconstructing the ideas of such philosophers within their respective historical contexts. In other words, Straussians deal primarily with problems, whereas their opponents deal primarily with 'doctrines, theories and systems' (Lorenz Krüger; see below).

An example of divisions which have little to do with the existence and nature of Islamic political philosophy can be found in Gutas's review of Butterworth's translation of Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*.[56] Gutas mainly targeted Butterworth's aim to understand the text 'on its own terms' – an aim which, according to him, led the translator to disregard its historical and semantic context. The method which led to such disregard is that Butterworth assumed Ibn Rushd had the text of Aristotle's *Poetics* at his disposal as we have it today, thereby ignoring the transformations it experienced not least through its translation into Arabic. According to Gutas, Butterworth also ignored the fact that compared to modern readers Ibn Rushd knew very little about ancient Greek civilisation – the cultural context is of course key for a text like the *Poetics*. Gutas explained these methodological failures by referring to Butterworth's view that the ideas expressed in the texts in question are 'essentially sound and thus … have an intrinsic value and … [are] of relevance today.'[57] While he concedes that this is a legitimate point, he insists that it should not interfere with the work of a translator or editor. Buttterworth replied to Gutas's criticism 4 years later. He distinguished two opposed views: that which tries to 'make sense of what the author actually says' and that which is limited to 'philological determinism.'[58] From an outside perspective, it is difficult to see why these two views should be regarded as mutually exclusive. In the opinion of the present writer, trying to make sense of 'what the author actually says' is only possible if we also try to establish what the author referred to. According to Butterworth, Ibn Rushd's lack of knowledge of ancient Greece was a concern 'not at issue.'[59] The task of 'serious

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[56] 'Review: On Translating Averroes' Commentaries', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110 (1990), pp. 92–101. Butterworth has replied in 'Translation and Philosophy: The Case of Averroes' Commentaries', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26 (1994), pp. 19–35.

[57] Gutas, 'Review: On Translating Averroes' Commentaries', p. 93.

[58] Butterworth, 'Translation and Philosophy: The Case of Averroes' Commentaries', p. 21.

[59] Ibid., p. 20.

Editor's Proof

scholars' was rather to make sense of the text based on the assumption that Ibn Rushd had a 'coherent and thoughtful position'.[60] In a revealing phrase, Butterworth argued that the philological method could not possibly tell us what Ibn Rushd says about the *Poetics* – such arguments were those usually made by scientists.[61] He sees his own approach as 'in the service of philosophy,' one that seeks to 'achieve a better grasp of the major problem.'

Analytical Versus Continental Philosophy

These differences clearly go beyond the simple argument about *Persecution and the Art of Writing* and the political implications of Arabic/Islamic philosophy. I do not therefore think that it is very helpful to summarise their differences solely under the labels 'Straussianism' and 'anti-Straussianism'. What has also been nurturing my doubts about these labels is the fact that as far as American foreign politics are concerned, protagonists of both academic camps often share very similar views. They are equally opposed to the views of the group of people in US politics who are usually called Straussians and who have been identified as the driving force behind the invasion in Iraq – among them Paul Wolfowitz. One of the main accusations connected with this label is that because they endorsed the principles of esotericism, disguising their real views was part of their agenda.[62] As has already been alluded to above, being a Straussian in our field implies thus a very specific set of opinions regarding the role of philosophy in historical Islamic societies, but neither does it bear any implications regarding other fields in which 'Straussianism' is a relevant category, nor is it an accurate label for their overall approach to the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy.

Gutas establishes several categories of scholars who are guided by what he regards as misinterpretations of Arabic philosophy, but while elucidating several other fronts, they do not offer an explanation for the background of the dispute in question.[63] A division which I have found very helpful to further analyse the Straussian divide is that between analytical and continental philosophy. I would like to use this division for two different aspects of the historiography of Islamic/Arabic philosophy: (1) the method and (2) the purpose of studying the history of philosophy.

Uncorrected Proof

[60] Ibid., p. 20.

[61] Ibid., p. 21.

[62] Among other journalists, Seymour M. Hersh pointed out the Straussian connection in his article 'Selective Intelligence' published 12 May 2003 in the *New Yorker*. A long critique of this theory of a Straussian conspiracy is Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth about Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[63] Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century'. In addition to Straussianism, Gutas highlights Orientalist and esoteric interpretations as erroneous.

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By way of introducing my argument, I would like to distinguish three levels on which the difference between analytical and continental philosophy is important:

1. For the purposes of this chapter, the difference between the analytical and the continental tradition (a division which is arguably more important to philosophers in the Anglo-American world than on the European continent) is understood very broadly as a cultural difference reflected in different understandings of philosophy.[64] This cultural difference is behind many of the fundamental divisions in philosophy: knowledge vs. wisdom, science vs. art, Positivism vs. Romanticism. A very simple way of dividing analytical and continental philosophers is the different authorities they follow. Frege, Wittgenstein, Carnap and Quine are authorities of the analytical tradition, whereas the continentals follow Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida. Even though these authorities play a role only through their legacies and less as direct points of reference in the texts under consideration here, we do find the odd reference which may turn out to be revealing. The fact that Leaman uses Wittgenstein in his discussion of Ibn Rushd the Averroist may be a poor indicator, but fits into the general outlook of his approach.
2. The debate about analytical and continental traditions in the historiography of philosophy owes a lot to the rise of critical theory since the 1960s. It has been led for several decades already among those who study Western philosophy with major contributions from Quentin Skinner and Richard Rorty, among others.[65] The main division, or at least one of the main divisions, concerns the subject matter of philosophy as determined by the purpose of studying the history of philosophy. Scholars in the analytical tradition tend to practise history of ideas in a very strict sense – it is the philosophical value of the ideas that they are interested in. Philosophers of the continental tradition, broadly speaking, practise intellectual history in the broader sense of Geistesgeschichte, aiming at a more general contextualisation of ideas. What this implies is that these scholars take historical, religious, political and ideological concerns into consideration which their analytical counterparts either disregard or to which they assign a much lower priority. To put it in the words of the editors of a collection of articles on the philosophy of the history of philosophy, analytical philosophers fail to see past Xs in terms of present non-philosophical Zs because they tend to see past ideas in terms of present philosophical debates.[66] The approach of continental

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[64] A concise and very readable definition is offered by Simon Critchley in his *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and his introduction to *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, eds Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

[65] *Philosophy in History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy*, eds Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). See also the first volume of Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics* ('Regarding Method') (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[66] Rorty, Schneewind and Skinner, 'Introduction', *Philosophy in History*, pp. 1–14 (12).

Editor's Proof

philosophers reveals a greater concern for history, based on the conviction that in order to appreciate ideas of past thinkers, we have to see them in context, but perhaps also based on the conviction that historical change is part of the philosophical lesson to be learned from studying the history of philosophy.[67] The comparison with science is again revealing. Analytical philosophers approach the history of philosophy not unlike the history of science, where there is a clear consensus on whether a past scientist was right or wrong.[68]

3. The third case in which this difference is relevant is in history of philosophy as part of a different field or discipline such as Arabic or Islamic Studies. Islamic intellectual history involves various kinds of academic enquiry and scholars are often eclectic in their methods. Sometimes they develop them more independently as a reaction to their sources and interests, sometimes they are inspired by developments in related fields. There are clearly parallels and even direct connections between the debates mentioned under (1) and (2) and those who study the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy, but so far scholars in our field have been reluctant to join the general debates more actively.

Method: History of Philosophy as a Historical Exercise

As far as their methods are concerned, I would like to identify an analytical tendency among the Straussians and a continental one among the opponents, most notably Gutas. This should not be misread as a claim that those identified here as Straussians are in fact analytical philosophers and their opponents continental philosophers. It rather establishes a parallel between their respective approaches to the history of philosophy. Gutas's review of Butterworth's edition and translation of Ibn Rushd's Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* can serve as an example. Gutas criticises Butterworth for having stripped the text and its transmission of its historical context. A similar criticism may be implied in his attacks on the Straussians when he suggests that it is what they perceive as the perennial philosophical questions in historical texts that determines their analysis rather than the unbiased approach of an historian. This may be a topic of polemics among scholars more than anything else. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify Gutas's position here with the attitude of those historians of philosophy who follow the continental tradition and for whom history is essential – both for the interpretation of philosophers of past times and for their own self-perception as philosophers. Evidence for the concerns of the Straussians in the analytical tradition is also amply available. Butterworth criticised Fritz Zimmermann, for example, for his focus on philological history: 'the history of the idea alone matters, not the soundness of the

[67] Charles Taylor, 'Philosophy and its History', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 17–30.

[68] Richard Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 49–75.

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idea itself.'[69] Muhsin Mahdi, one of the most prominent Straussians and a student of Leo Strauss himself, once put his criticism of what was for him the Orientalist approach in the following words:

> One of the strangest criticisms that continues to be made by some of the representatives of the older, historical and philological tradition of Islamic studies in the West has to do with the validity of attempts to think or rethink the thoughts of a philosopher such as Alfarabi, Avicenna, or Averroes. This means that one can treat their thought historically, biographically, sociologically, and so forth – that is good scholarship. But to think philosophically when dealing with the works of these philosophers, that is said not to be scientific. This view makes no sense, of course.[70]

What this observation confirms is the tendency of the Straussians to focus on problems whereas the scholars whom they criticise focus on doctrines, theories or systems. To put the implications of this difference in the words of Lorenz Krüger, the problem of some historians is that they 'give up the quest for theoretical continuity in order to save continuity at the level of problems.'[71] Furthermore, Krüger remarks, 'the problem-history view replaces genuine temporal development by a spurious present.'[72] I will return to this aspect in the next section.

One could, of course, object that scholars like Gutas do not define themselves as philosophers, but rather as historians of ideas, whereas Mahdi et al. see themselves very much as active participants in a philosophical debate. While I doubt that this solves the problem, since disagreements remain (e.g., did Ibn Rushd believe philosophy was superior to religion), I also doubt that this is a fair description. What Gutas defines as the historical dimension of a text exclusively concerns problems of textual transmission which are key to any philosophical interpretation of Averroes – other historical questions such as the social or political situation are not even included.[73] The questions over which they are divided are not simply those of historical methodology, but reveal genuine philosophical concerns.

Uncorrected Proof

[69] Charles Butterworth, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy Today', in *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction*, ed. Thérèse-Anne Druart (Washington: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1988), pp. 55–140 (95).

[70] Muhsin Mahdi, 'Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1 (1990), pp. 73–98 (93).

[71] Lorenz Krüger, 'Why do we Study the History of Philosophy', in *Philosophy in History*, pp. 77–101 (80).

[72] Krüger, 'Why do we Study the History of Philosophy', p. 81.

[73] Gutas criticises Butterworth for working on the assumption that Ibn Rushd had access to the text of Aristotle's *Poetics* as we have it now and to ignore 'factors such as translators' misunderstandings, scribal errors, extrapolations, exegetical additions and elaborations that accumulated over the 12 centuries and more that separate classical Greek philosophy and the beginning of Arabic, and the semantic and connotative range of Arabic terms and expressions that were current at the time of each Arabic philosopher' (Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy', p. 22). In his *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), Gutas employs a much broader notion of historical context.

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Needless to say, these are complex issues and scholars rarely fit neatly into clear-cut categories. As mentioned above, the parallels between the divide into Straussians and anti-Straussians and continental vs. analytical methods are only partial. We can see this from such cases as Oliver Leaman who is clearly a critic of Straussianism but defends an analytical approach.[74] Furthermore, we are dealing here with gradual differences, not two completely separate camps.

Purpose: History of Philosophy as a Philosophical Exercise

I would like to return to Krüger's second observation concerning the balance of past and present. Because Straussians whom I have associated here with the analytical tradition focus on problems instead of reconstructing systems of thought, they are more likely to see a value in the philosophical ideas, but present them with a teleological twist that is more typical of continental philosophy in the tradition of Hegel. They sometimes denounce their critics as 'historicists' (following Strauss's terminology) who endorse positivist, scientific principles. One can also find examples of such tendencies outside the group of those who are primarily identified as Straussians. A case in point is Richard Taylor who introduces his above-mentioned article with a comment on 'the era of Averroes' as 'one which can be seen to be a culmination of a long developing historical dialectic of rationalism and philosophical epistemological optimism on the one hand and fideistic literal interpretation of Scriptures on the part of fundamentalist theologians on the other.'[75] This might be fairly weak evidence, but perhaps it is not a coincidence that Taylor refers to a historical dialectic – a term usually associated with Hegel's philosophy of history. His interpretation may of course owe a lot to the view of the contemporary Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, whom he refers to in this context.[76] Like those who embrace the Straussian narrative, Taylor also points out the practical use of Ibn Rushd's ideas.[77]

Again, Mahdi offers a much more elaborate expression of this idea concerning the purpose of studying the history of Islamic philosophy. It should help us to

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[74] Leaman, 'Does the Interpretation of Islamic Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?'; *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), ch. 6 (pp. 182–201), *Averroes and his Philosophy*, pp. 9–11. Butterworth and Gutas are united in their criticism of Leaman's credentials. See Charles Butterworth, 'Review: On Scholarship and Scholarly Conventions', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106 (1986), pp. 725–732, and Dimitri Gutas's review in *Der Islam*, 65 (1988), pp. 339–342.

[75] Taylor, '"Truth Does not Contradict Truth"', p. 3.

[76] Ibid. Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *Introduction à la critique de la raison arabe* (Paris: La Découverte and Institut du monde arabe, 1994).

[77] Taylor, '"Truth Does not Contradict Truth"', p. 12: 'There are many contemporary philosophers of religion who follow some parts of the route of Averroes and it may be that further careful study of Averroes' thought on philosophy and religion will have something to contribute to current discussions of the interpretation of texts and the understanding of the powers and limits of philosophy, as well as of the relationship or connection between philosophy and religion.'

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achieve the reconciliation that German Romanticism had been unable to bring about, the reconciliation between rationalism and poetics, in other words the creation of a kind of rationalism that leads mankind back to its authentic self and does not alienate or enslave it (to put it in words closer to those of Adorno and Horkheimer).[78] It is already Strauss's approach to the history of philosophy which has been described as a turn against the 'scientific' way of reading these texts.[79]

The Straussians were not the first who interpreted Islamic/Arabic philosophy within a teleological framework. It has long been claimed (and it is sometimes still held) that the historical task of the Arabs/Muslims was to preserve Greek philosophy and science as an essentially European legacy while Europe passed its dark ages. When the continent started to rediscover its heritage, the package was duly returned by way of translation to its rightful owners. It was the Catholic view of the history of philosophy which contributed to such a narrative – a narrative which culminated in Paris and with the heroes Aquinas and Albertus Magnus. By and large, scholarship has abandoned this narrative, but this does not mean that teleology has been abandoned. We can see examples of other teleologies in historiographies of Islamic/Arabic philosophy which are not shaped by the Catholic, but rather by the Protestant tradition where Max Weber replaces Aquinas and Ibn Khaldūn takes the position of Ibn Sīnā.[80] Instead of a metaphysical we have a scientific, secular telos here, but a telos nonetheless. Likewise, an idea of progress in which enlightenment is a prominent term seems to constitute the telos of the Straussians.

Another important difference connected with teleological frameworks is how far Western scholars tell the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy as part of their own history or as the history of someone else (the famous 'other') which may even follow different rules. Traditionally, this history is told as part of our own, Western history – the Muslims kept 'our' heritage safe. For scholars in the continental tradition, this aspect seems contingent. They may have private views, but these seem irrelevant in their scholarship. While according to the 'Orientalist' tradition different rules apply to the history and historiography of Islamic philosophy, these principles are nowadays dismissed by most scholars.

Straussians make the history of Islamic/Arabic philosophy in various ways part of their own philosophical practice as if we could establish a dialogue between past philosophers and ourselves.[81] Even though Butterworth argues that Ibn Rushd was not a precursor of the enlightenment,[82] in principle he seems to regard the usefulness of the

Uncorrected Proof

[78] Mahdi, 'Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy', p. 97.

[79] Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth about Leo Strauss*, p. 42.

[80] The significance of inner-Christian conflicts on German Oriental scholarship has recently been explored by Suzanne L. Marchand in her *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Washington: German Historical Institute and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[81] Butterworth, 'Translation and Philosophy', p. 21.

[82] Charles Butterworth, 'Averroës, Precursor of the Enlightenment?', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 16 (1996), pp. 6–18.

Editor's Proof

discussions of past philosophers as relevant to helping us to ask better questions. My impression is that (at least as a tendency) while it does not matter for the anti-Straussians if they consider past discussions pointless, it is important for the Straussians that they themselves have an opinion regarding the questions past philosophers discussed or at least regarding the quality of past philosophers' arguments. Both, I believe, are perfectly legitimate attitudes, but they represent different exercises.

Conclusions

If we deal with various aspects pertinent to the history of Averroism in the Islamic world, such as the nature or even the very existence of Islamic political philosophy, it is difficult to ignore these debates which have been going on for the last few decades. The occasionally strong polemical tones make it sometimes a tedious task to appreciate specific arguments. If we want to answer the question raised in the title of my contribution – Was Ibn Rushd an Averroist? – we can return to our limited number of primary sources and will probably come up with one of the answers which have already been given. But, as I have tried to show, this only gets us so far and does not seem to yield any satisfactory conclusions. Especially in the case of problems which have been revisited by scholars many times and with contradictory results, it is time to confront the underlying methodological differences. While I should stress again that the categories I have suggested here are too neat to serve as comprehensive explanations of ongoing debates, they are a useful *tool* for analysing some of the implicit disagreements.

It is not only in the case of Ibn Rushd that we find these very basic methodological divides. Similar arguments can be perceived in the study of Ibn Khaldūn where some scholars are very much interested in the biographical and broader historical context of Ibn Khaldūn whereas others, most prominently Aziz al-Azmeh, make a case for limiting the analysis to the text alone (i.e., understanding, as Butterworth does, a text 'on its own terms').[83] Another divide which can be found in both cases is that between the legal or the philosophical character of a text. Muhsin Mahdi, for example, emphasised the philosophical foundation of Ibn Khaldūn's work and rejected Gibb's view who considered it based on legal principles.[84] The background of his argument was the 'Orientalist' conviction that law is the fundamental science of Islam, i.e., he considered Islamic intellectual history to follow 'other' rules. Are there any parallels between this understanding of Ibn Khaldūn and Gutas's stress on the legal character of *Faṣl al-maqāl*? Like Mahdi, Gutas criticises the Orientalist idea of an essential contradiction between rationalism and the 'Muslim mind'.[85] He is also a scholar who

[83] Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, 1981).

[84] Mahdi, 'Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy', pp. 85 ff.

[85] Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century'.

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does not deny the presence of philosophical arguments where he sees them. On the other hand, the problematic place of philosophy in societies shaped by the Islamic religion has long been an issue in his scholarship as is obvious from his insisting on the expression 'Arabic philosophy' instead of 'Islamic philosophy'.

As somebody whose philosophical education was in the hands of third-generation representatives of the *Frankfurter Schule*, I cannot but emphasise the advantages of the continental approach to the history of philosophy. But I also think that a pluralist attitude is helpful as in the view expressed by Josef van Ess in his review of Oliver Leaman's *Moses Maimonides* (London: Routledge, 1990) that we either take the best of both worlds or simply agree that we are talking about different things.[86] The scholars cited here make different kinds of claims when they study Ibn Rushd. Historians are translators – do they perhaps simply translate into different languages? It may not be a coincidence that the debate between Gutas and Butterworth is partly one about translation. But should a pluralist attitude go so far as to allow contradictory answers to the question of whether or not Ibn Rushd was an Averroist? Would it be a plausible solution to suggest, for example, that while the ideas of Ibn Rushd as he expressed them in his preserved texts suggest that he was an Averroist, we have to reach the opposite conclusion if we take his historical context into consideration? Tempting as it may be to give such an easy answer, it certainly does not solve the problem. First of all, the situation is much more complex and involves Straussianism as an additional dividing line independent of Ibn Rushd. Furthermore, scholars whom I have associated here with the continental tradition also approach Ibn Rushd's philosophy as part of the history of ideas (not least to challenge others whom I have associated with the analytical tradition here), not as part of an intellectual history in the broader sense. They would claim that the preserved texts only supported their own hypotheses. Finally, even though one should perhaps not dismiss the option of an inconsistent Ibn Rushd too easily, the solution would probably burden the philosopher with a problem created by modern interpreters.

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[86] Published in *Die Welt des Islams*, 32 (1992), pp. 145–147. Whereas other reviewers including Butterworth and Gutas (see note 74 above) have doubted Leaman's academic credentials, van Ess at least acknowledges that Leaman approaches problems as a 'Systemiker'. This, however, is not the main point in the criticism of Butterworth and Gutas.

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